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JUNE 22, 2009

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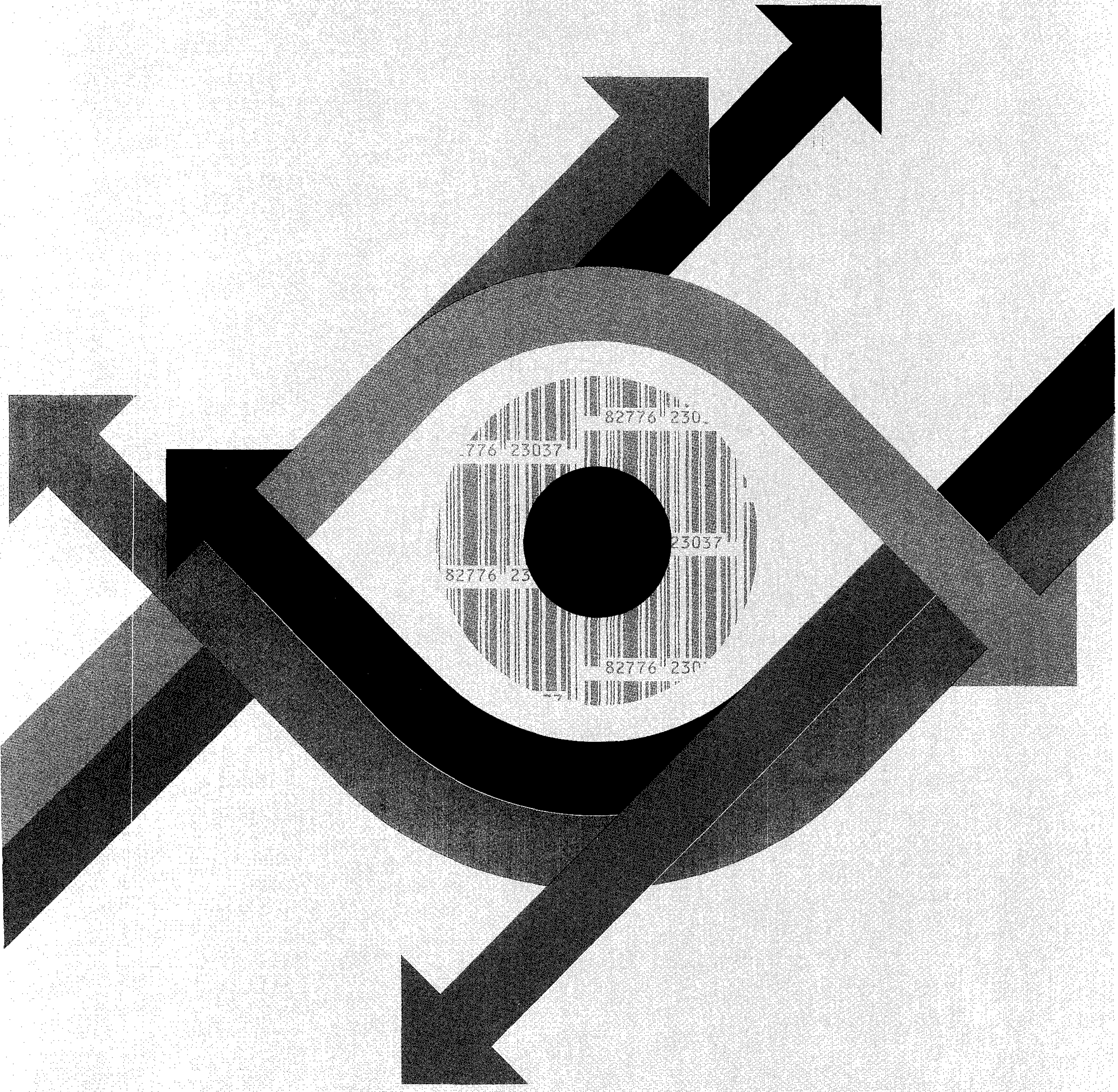
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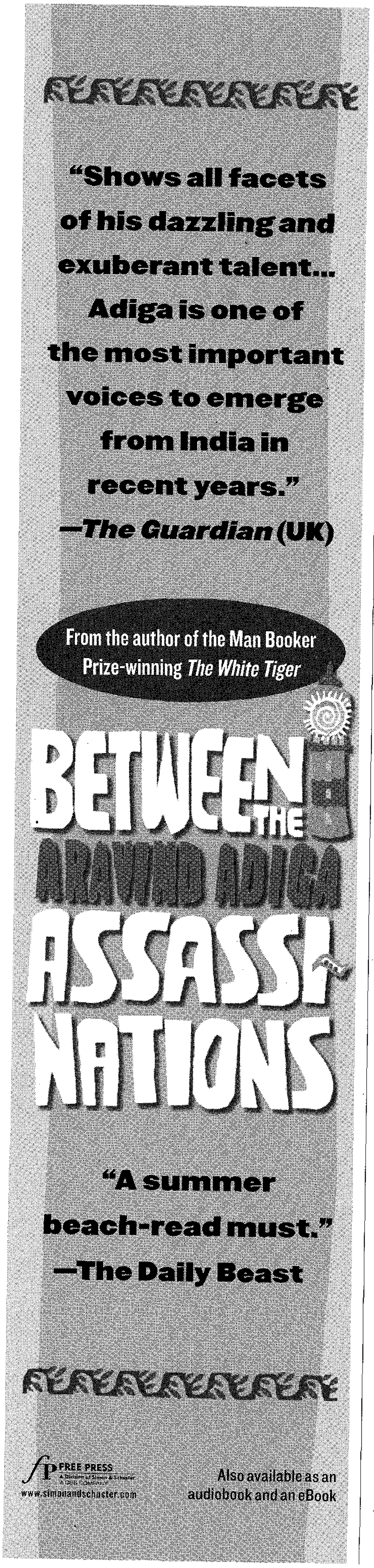
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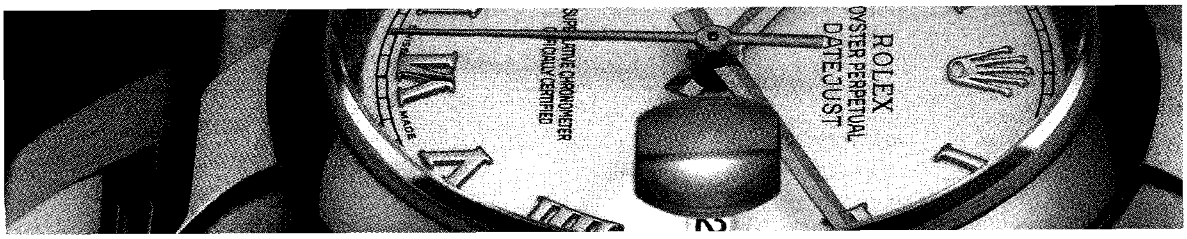
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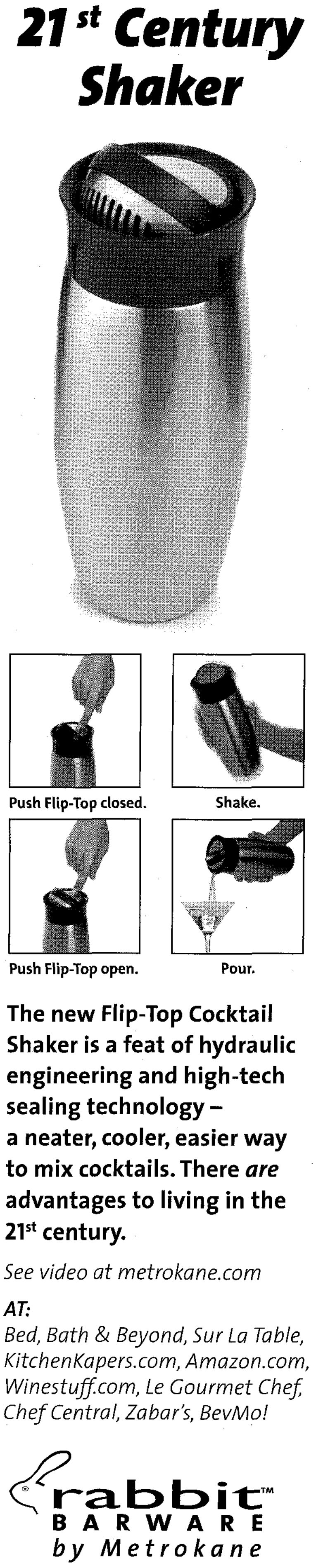
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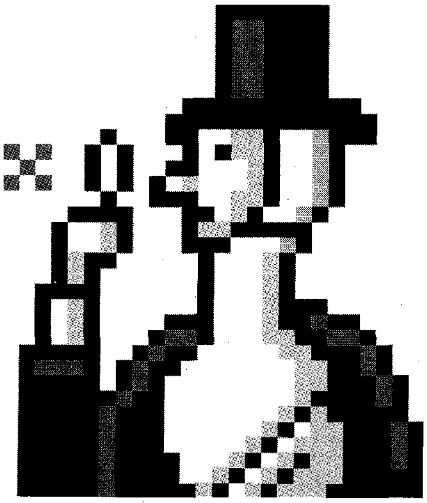
THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Audio: *Lauren Collins* on Nora Roberts; *Dorothy Wickenden* hosts the Political Scene, a weekly roundtable. / Ask the Author: *James Surowiecki* takes readers' questions. / Video: *Richard Brody's* DVD of the week; cityscapes by *Jorge Colombo.* / The Book Club reads Wendell Steavenson's "The Weight of a Mustard Seed." / Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on politics, *Amy Davidson* on the day's news, *Sasha Frere-Jones* on pop music, plus the Book Bench, the Cartoon Lounge, Goings On, and more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a complete archive of issues, back to 1925.



THE MAIL

TEACH THEM WELL

Douglas McGray, in writing about Green Dot Public Schools, quotes its founder, Steve Barr, as saying, "Now, every year or two, there's some new reform. You get reform fatigue" ("The Instigator," May 11th). When I started teaching in New Orleans, in 1991, the latest reform movement was to end ability grouping. The idea was that the lowest-performing students needed to interact with higher achievers, and that average and better students would benefit from those relationships, too. Yet now, with the emergence of charter schools (nowhere more so than in post-Katrina New Orleans), we are essentially reviving the practice. Private and magnet schools take the honors students, charter schools attempt to create a "regular" track, and the failing public schools, drained of the top and middle kids, warehouse the hardest-to-reach students. Charter and magnet schools worsen the problems of the most vulnerable children by isolating them in schools with the most dysfunction. If Education Secretary Arne Duncan is serious about reforming the lowest-performing schools, he needs to revisit a model that has unfortunately fallen far out of fashion—integration.

Ann Marie Coviello
New Orleans, La.

Some of the problems that McGray details in writing about the troubled school system in Los Angeles might be seen in a slightly different form in my well-funded suburban school district. Here, owing to concerns of élitism, academic responsibilities are dumbed down, because all students can't be as above average as they reportedly were born to be. With self-esteem emphasized above all else, students' lack of accomplishment is explained away in terms of different learning styles. And if some percentage of students poses serious threats to security and safety—attempted arson, dealing drugs, carrying weapons—upper-middle-class parents explain away those behaviors as adolescent acting out, unintended or overblown, and then leave it to their lawyers to take care of any aftermath. Seems like the same lesson applies to us all. Good education means good teachers; interested, involved, and goal-oriented parents; flexible unions and school administrations; and children who are not abandoned to years without guidelines, goals, and caring adults.

Florence Katz Burstein
Mercer Island, Wash.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

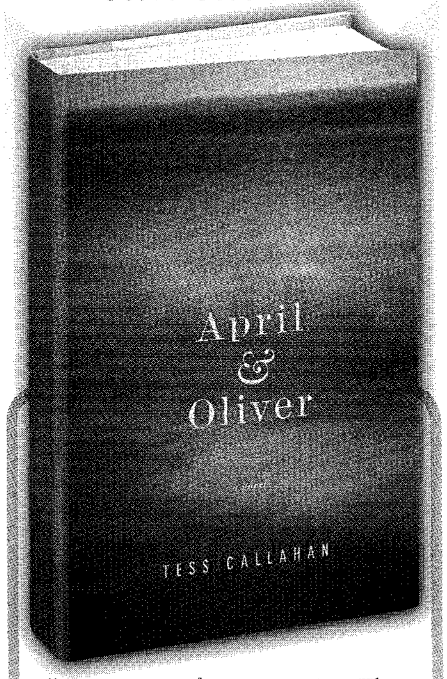
As a longtime board member, author of "The Board Book," and a former president of Princeton University and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, I read James Surowiecki's recent column with special interest (The Financial Page, June 1st). Surowiecki is right to raise tough questions about the roles that boards of directors have played in recent years. However, it is a mistake to think that boards can make policy. They can raise challenging questions and provoke management into considering new options, but they have neither the competence nor the staff needed to do more than that. Also, recruiting board members (and dismissing those who are ineffective) should be handled by the board itself, under the leadership of a director who knows that members need to be relentlessly independent and that the effectiveness of the board depends not just on the qualities of the individuals who serve on it but on how well they function collectively. Most important, the jobs of C.E.O. and chairman of the board need to be separated, as is done routinely in the nonprofit sector and in many other countries. Separating these roles is the best way to make clear that the C.E.O. works for the board, not the other way around.

William G. Bowen
New York City

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

Sometimes the last person you want in your life is the only one who can save it.



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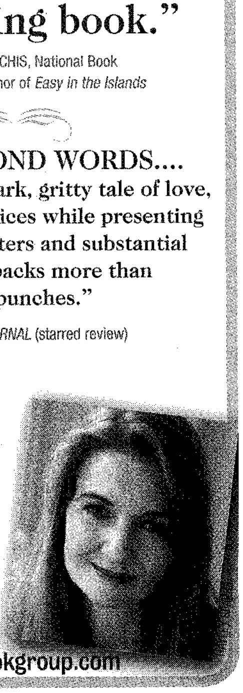

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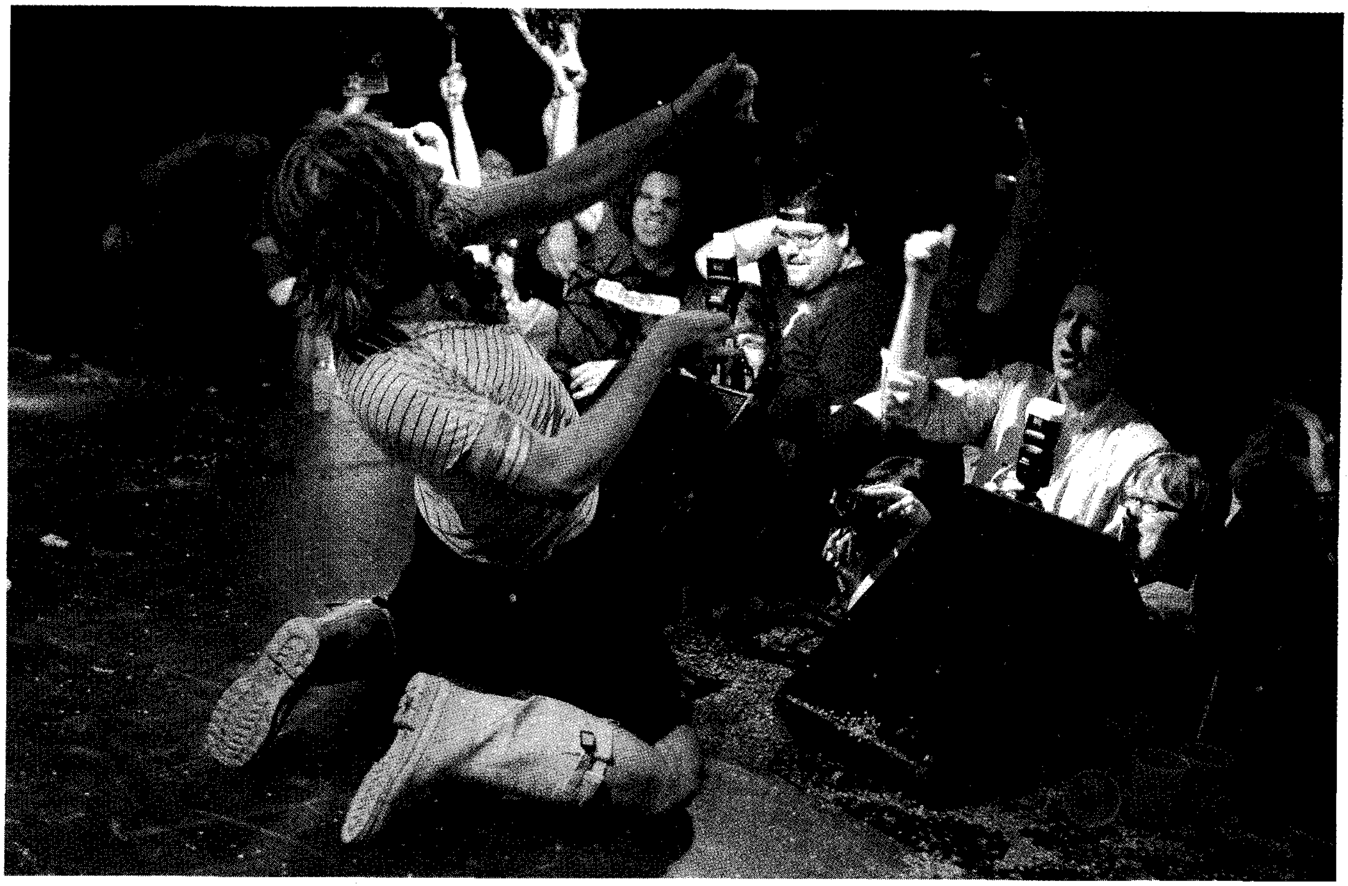

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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21	22	23	17	18	19	20

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
GOING SOLO

SoHo Playhouse débuts "Summer Solo Series," a lineup of one-night-only performances of exemplary solo work. Highlights include a piece written and directed by Adam Rapp, "Nocturne," on June 25, and Nilaja Sun's "No Child . . .," directed by Hal Brooks, on July 9. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
LOCAL HERO

The piano player, quirky singer, and barbed lyricist Regina Spektor was born in Moscow, but she grew up in the Bronx, and she first made her name in New York City's anti-folk scene. Three years ago, she hit the charts with her album "Begin to Hope." She returns with a new release, "Far," and a show at the Beacon Theatre. (See page 11.)

ART
NATIONAL TREASURE

In 1978, archeologists unearthed a cache of Bronze Age artifacts in Afghanistan—swords, crowns, garments embellished with gold—known as the Bactrian Hoard. War soon broke out and the objects disappeared, only to be rediscovered in the Presidential Palace in 2003, where they had been stored for safekeeping. A selection of them is included in "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul," at the Met. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TRIUMPH OF LOVE

When it comes to East Coast Baroque, the Boston Early Music Festival is tops. Its production of "The Coronation of Poppea," Monteverdi's coldhearted (and deliciously lyrical) examination of love and power, comes to the Berkshires for three performances. (See page 16.)

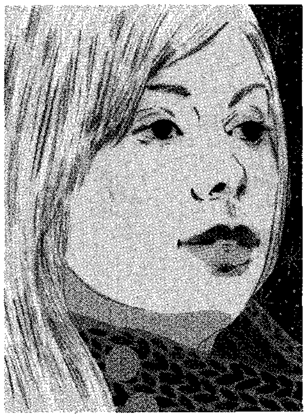
MOVIES
THE FAR EAST COAST

Great Britain may have sent over Alfred Hitchcock, but it got Richard Lester, who was born in Philadelphia. MOMA's series "The Sixties: Yanks in Britain" features "A Hard Day's Night," as well as other works by American directors who crossed over, including "The Servant," by Joseph Losey. (See page 21.)

The U.S. Air Guitar Championships. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

Considers you
environment too

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SWEDE DEAL



Anna Ternheim is one of almost a dozen Swedes who could easily take over the American charts if the right people were paying attention. Let me qualify that—Ternheim is not a Swede the way the electro-pop star Robyn is a Swede, or the way her playful peer Lykke Li is a Swede. This thirty-one-year-old has ties to older, un-Swedish folksingers like Anne Briggs and Shirley Collins, with an occasional hint of PJ Harvey sneaking into the mix. Ternheim sings exclusively in English, and her previous American album, "Halfway to Fivepoints," was a fantastic blend of her two Swedish albums, with a few additional originals. Her new release, "Leaving on a Mayday," uses American musicians to provide a bed for her calm, deliberate alto and unshowy fatalism. Ternheim is a perfect musician for 2009: born to play live, allergic to sentiment, and a little darker than blue. The millions of fans who catapulted Norah Jones into orbit should return to do the same for Ternheim. She plays on June 18 at the Bell House and June 22 at Joe's Pub.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ARCHBISHOP SUPREME TARTUFFE
Classical Theatre of Harlem presents the première of Alfred Preisser and Randy Weiner's satire of a criminal church official inspired by Molière's classic comedy. André De Shields and Ted Lange ("The Love Boat") star; Preisser directs. In previews. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

DANCE OF THE SEVEN HEADED MOUSE
Christopher McElroen directs a drama by Carole Gaunt, about a wealthy Upper East Side family coping with the death of their daughter. In previews. Opens June 23. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NOT KNOWING
At the Kitchen, Mike Taylor's latest multimedia performance piece, a dissection of reality. June 18-20. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

SHAFRIKA, THE WHITE GIRL
A new musical by Anika Larsen, co-conceived and directed by April Nickell, about Larsen's upbringing in a large multiracial adoptive family. In previews. Opens June 21. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-868-4444.)

SOHO PLAYHOUSE SUMMER SOLO SERIES
SoHo Playhouse inaugurates a series of one-night-only solo performances, beginning with "Mother Load," written and performed by Amy Wilson, on June 18, and "The Tricky Part," written and performed by Martin Moran, on June 22. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

STUNNING
LCT3 presents a drama by David Adjmi, about a young Syrian Jewish woman in Brooklyn who marries a much older man. Anne Kauffman directs. In previews. Opens June 18. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

SWEET STORM
Alchemy Theatre, in association with LAByrinth, present Scott Hudson's new play, about a newlywed couple who encounter trouble on their honeymoon in a tree house. Padraic Lillis directs. Opens June 17. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE TIN PAN ALLEY RAG
Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new musical, written by Mark Saltzman, about a fictional meeting between Irving Berlin and Scott Joplin, featuring the music of both. Stafford Arima directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
Anne Hathaway stars as Viola in the Shakespeare comedy, the season opener for Shakespeare in the Park. The cast also includes Audra McDonald, Michael Cumpsty, Raúl Esparza, Julie White, Hamish Linklater, David Pittu, and Jay O. Sanders. Daniel Sullivan directs. In previews. (Delacorte, Central Park, enter at 81st St. and Central Park W. For information, call 212-539-8750.)

THE WIZ
Thomas Kail ("In the Heights") directs and Andy Blankenbuehler choreographs this "Encores! Summer Stars" production of the 1974 musical, based on the L. Frank Baum book. Ashanti, LaChanze, and Orlando Jones star. In previews. Opens June 18. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

NOW PLAYING

THE AMISH PROJECT
More an impressionistic poem than a narrative, Jessica Dickey's seventy-minute one-woman show, directed by Sarah Cameron Sunde, interweaves the Amish pacifist philosophy with Dickey's imagining of what happened on the day when ten young Amish girls were lined up in a schoolhouse in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 2006, and gunned down by a milkman. Dressed in traditional Amish clothing (bonnet, long blue dress, apron), Dickey plays seven characters, including the gunman, his wife, and two of the murdered girls. Rather than exploring the rock-bottom brutal events that inspired her script, Dickey skims the surface, reaching, instead, for a more transcendent experience: by enacting several sides of the story all at once, she tries, and fails, to make meaning out of meaninglessness. What could be a very sad play remains, for the most part, conceptual and unmoving. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

CORALINE
Leigh Silverman directs a new musical based on the novel by Neil Gaiman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (PARTS 1, 8 & 9)
Concluding the Public LAB season is the world première of a new play by, and featuring, Suzan-Lori Parks. Jo Bonney directs the multilayered tale, which encompasses slaves in the Civil War and a present-day general who is dying. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

FROM RUSSIA WITH ANGST
Five one-act plays adapted from short stories by Chekhov, directed by members of the Workshop Theatre Company. (312 W. 36th St. 212-695-4173, ext. 5.)

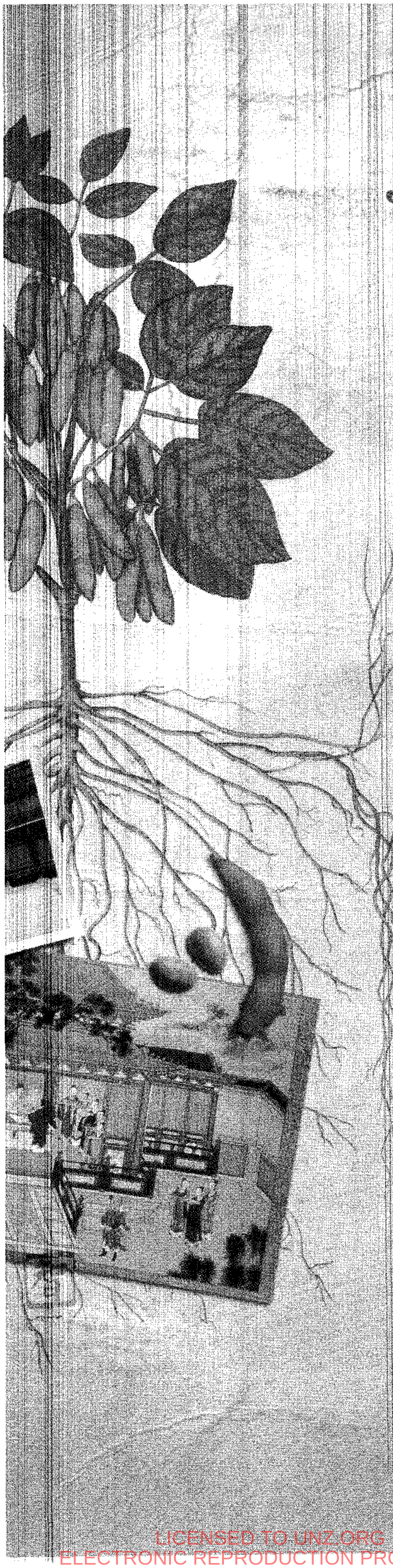
KING LEAR
In Central Park through June 21, New York Classical Theatre celebrates its tenth anniversary of free outdoor theatre with the Shakespeare tragedy, directed by Stephen Burdman. On June 23, the show moves to Battery Park's Clinton Castle. (Enter at 103rd St. at Central Park W. 212-252-4531.)

MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES MACHINES
An inspired, anarchic romp through the world of Rube Goldberg, created and performed by Quinn Bauriedel, Trey Lyford, and Geoff Sobelle (the team behind "All Wear Bowlers"). Three militaristic buffoons are encamped in a hideout fitted from top to bottom with wildly elaborate contraptions that perform trivial tasks. When they work, the effect is exhilarating—watch an egg get fried in ten demented steps—and when they don't, the guys improvise like pros. Although the piece carries undertones of wartime paranoia, any real meaning is washed away by the sheer delight of watching the actors interact with their ingenious set, which is packed full of visual surprises, right up to the giddily apocalyptic finale. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

NEXT FALL
Geoffrey Nauffts's small, lovely drama, produced by Naked Angels, is set in a hospital waiting room, where Adam (Patrick Breen) waits to hear if his lover, Luke (Patrick Heusinger), will survive an auto accident. Flashbacks reveal a tension between them driven by Luke's Christianity—he believed that Adam, a neurotic atheist, was going to Hell. The play's strength turns out not to be its insights into faith, which are nothing new, but its depiction of a gay relationship taxed by shame. As Adam struggles to honor Luke's wish to remain closeted to his conservative Southern family, we see the forces of love and dignity at odds, and the results are heartrending. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

OUR HOUSE
A violent crime in the Midwest becomes prime-time fodder for a scummy television executive (Christopher Evan Welch) in Theresa Rebeck's lame pseudo-satire about America's appetite for televised "reality" and the evil tycoons who feed it. Sadly, Rebeck, who owes more than just her prolificacy to the years she spent writing for TV crime dramas, can't quite bring herself to bite the hand that's fed her, loading the play—like a "Law & Order" episode—with so many eleventh-hour plot and tone reversals that she almost gets away with not having fresh insight into such well-trod satirical territory. Ironically, the whole thing—with its nakedly formulaic plotting and cast of talking heads—plays like a slapdash telefilm, but, unfortunately for the audience, they can't change the channel. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 21.)

RACHEL DOMM



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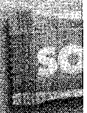

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THINGS OF DRY HOURS
Naomi Wallace's taut three-person drama, directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson at the New York Theatre Workshop, is set in 1932 in a cabin in Alabama, the home of a father and daughter, both widowed. Delroy Lindo gives a powerful, grounded performance as Tice Hogan, Sunday-school teacher, laid-off steelworker, and dedicated Communist; Roslyn Ruff is fierce as his wry and commanding daughter, Cali, a laundry woman for a wealthy family. When a white stranger, Corbin Teel (Garret Dillahunt), shows up, seeking refuge from the police, the Hogans reluctantly take him in, threatening their safety and upsetting their equilibrium. Wallace's dialogue sounds like poetry—rich, nimble, raw, and elevated—and the expert cast delivers it with a focussed intensity that makes it at times spellbinding, and almost convincing. (79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Jack Hofsiss directs John van Druten's comedy "Bell, Book and Candle," starring Arija Bareikis and Sam Robards. For more information, visit www.baystreet.org. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
At the Unicorn, Eric Hill directs Brian Friel's drama "Faith Healer"; on the Main Stage, Scott Coulter directs Scott Siegel's "Broadway by the Year." For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the grounds of Boscobel, Terrence O'Brien directs Shakespeare's "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," in repertory with "Much Ado About Nothing" and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

SHAKESPEARE ON THE SOUND
Joanna Settle directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with original music composed by Stew ("Passing Strange"). For more information, visit www.shakespeareonthesound.org. (Pinkney Park, 177 Rowayton Ave., Rowayton, Conn. 203-299-1300.)

The soulful Los Angeles-based reggae band the Aggrolites visits the Mercury Lounge.

ANNETTE MARNAT

Also Playing

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY: Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLITHE SPIRIT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IRENA'S VOW:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY STUART:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **9 TO 5: THE MUSICAL:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE NORMAN CONQUESTS:** Circle in the Square, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **RUINED:** City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TOXIC AVENGER:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **WAITING**

FOR GODOT: Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 20: Britain's **Ozric Tentacles** occupy the plateau between introspective progressive rock and frenetic dance music. For the long-running collective of neo-hippies, brevity is a dirty word. Their hypnotic dance-floor jams are epic in length.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (800-745-3000)—June 17: The local Russian-born singer-songwriter and piano player **Regina Spektor** has a style that ranges from folk to pop to punk. She's risen from the downtown anti-folk scene to the national stage, and she's here with songs from her new album, "Far."

THE BELL HOUSE
149 7th St., between Second and Third Aves., Brooklyn (718-643-6510)—June 18: **Kirstin Hersh,** the founding voice of Boston's Throwing Muses, crafts endearingly off-kilter music that wobbles between accessible pop and surrealist post-punk. Her quirky solo work pushes the envelope. With the Swedish singer-songwriter **Anna Ternheim.** June 19: Last winter, the local and unsigned act **Locksley** backed the Kinks' Ray Davies on his East Coast tour. Given Locksley's penchant for British Invasion songwriting, you might think this would be a high-water mark for the band. They continue to evolve, however, and have an upcoming release, "Be in Love." Their live shows blend an airtight sixties pop sensibility with a garage-punk snarl.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 19-20: Armed with irresistible synth hooks and athletic electronic beats, **Passion Pit** are poised to be the next indie phenomenon. Listen for "Sleepyhead," the first single of their new record, "Manners." It's an easy to swallow seasonal banger that will most likely find its way onto many summer iPod playlists.

BROOKLYN LYCEUM
June 19-20: **"OJ All Day."** The local label, studio, mail-order distributor, and community hub Olive Juice Music was born in 1999, when Matt Roth and his friends came together on the Lower East Side to promote their folk-punk music. Roth continues to record, produce, and distribute music directly from his small Manhattan apartment, and the community that he fostered has grown. This festival, now in its third year, showcases the best of New York's independent music scene and celebrates real D.I.T. (do it together) music-making. Nearly forty artists and bands are slated to perform, including **Dufus,** the **Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players, Schwervon!, Urban Barnyard, Huggabroomstik, Shilpa Ray,** the **New York Howl, Ching Chong Song, Susan Hwang, Prewar Yardsale,** the **Wowz,** and **Toby Goodshank.** There will also be a book-and-clothing swap, a craft sale, and an all-night dance party, among other events.

CAKE SHOP
152 Ludlow St. (212-253-0036)—June 17: The Brooklyn-based hardcore revivalists **Pygmy Shrews** have a strong experimentalist agenda that permeates their fleeting sonic assault. Opening the show are their fellow-Brooklynites **Animal,** a duo whose improvised instrumental tumult is abrasive yet warm and melodic, and **Upsilon Acrux,** a quintet out of Los Angeles intent on introducing wordless prog rock to a younger generation.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 19: A night of calypso with **David Rudder.**

CITY WINERY
143 Varick St. (212-608-0555)—June 23: When **John Hammond** made his début, in 1962, there were questions of nepotism; his father was a legendary talent scout and record producer for Columbia Records. In fact, the son was estranged from the father, living hand to mouth and learning to play the blues from some of the masters, including Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker. Then, there was the question of whether a white man could sing the blues. Nearly a half century later, Hammond is just a bluesman—no adjective needed—and one of the best around.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 17: **Nouvelle Vague** is a French pop collective featuring silky chanteuses purring New Wave and post-punk chestnuts in a surprisingly seductive bossa-nova style. In a twist on its formula, the outfit collaborates with stalwarts like Martin Gore, of Depeche Mode, and Ian McCulloch, of Echo & the Bunnymen, on its latest album, "NV3."

GLASSLANDS GALLERY
289 Kent Ave., between S. 1st and S. 2nd Sts., Brooklyn (No phone)—June 17: The Brooklyn duo **Sisters** pull nineties alternative rock into the twenty-first century, skillfully tempering Gen X slacker aesthetics with an earnest optimism and youthful vigor. With the galloping tunes of **My Teenage Stride.**

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—June 17: **Tinted Windows** is a new supergroup featuring the vocalist Taylor Hanson, the Smashing Pumpkins guitarist James Iha, the Fountains of Wayne bassist Adam Schlesinger, and the Cheap Trick drummer Bun E. Carlos. It plays power pop of an eighties vintage.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 22: **Anna Ternheim** (see the Bell House).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—June 21: The Los Angeles-based band the **Aggrolites** plays what it calls "dirty reggae," a mix of old-school soulfulness and warm island rhythms. They first came together earlier this decade to back the reggae great Derrick Morgan, but quickly found their own groove. They've been spreading the organ-and-horn-fuelled funky gospel ever since. Their latest album, "IV," just came out.

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—June 18: The French indie-rock phenomenon **Phoenix.** June 22: The local proto-punk institution the **New York Dolls** may be down to just two original members, the lead singer David Johansen and guitarist Sylvain Sylvain, but they are eager to prove that they're a real band and not simply indulging in a perpetual reunion tour. They just released their second album since getting back together a few years ago. " 'Cause I Said So" was produced by Todd Rundgren (who produced the band's seismic 1973 début), and it finds the storied group trading in the same vein of bawdy rock and roll that won them their initial fame.

NATIONAL UNDERGROUND
159 E. Houston St. (212-475-0611)—June 23: Connie Petruk, one of the most visible backup singers in New York (she's the arresting redhead just off center stage at every Losers' Lounge gig), fronts her own band, the **Tall Pines.** This show celebrates the release of the group's new album, "Campfire Songs," most of which was written by Petruk's husband, Christmas Davis, and much of which evokes Bobbie Gentry, Tony Joe White, and Dusty Springfield. With **Joe McGinty's Keyboard Karaoke** and **Laura Cantrell.**

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
June 17: The Washington, D.C., guitarist and singer **Chuck Brown,** who is known as the Godfather of Go-Go. As the leading ambassador of that bottom-heavy funk subgenre, Brown carries on his mission with zeal; he may be in his seventies, but he can party like a teen-ager. (Rockefeller Park. For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

STUDIO B
259 Banker St., Brooklyn (718-389-1880)—June 19: The late-night Brooklyn institution Finger on the Pulse continues its popular new party, "Yikes!!!" with Toronto's **Thunderheist.** The electro-hop headbangers will perform tracks from their re-

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cent self-titled release, which traffics in colossal electronica beats and sung/spoken hooks. With the Oakland electro-funk duo **Wallpaper.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 20: The pop-inflected singer and saxophonist **Curtis Stigers.**

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 16-20: On his new album, "Dedicated to You," the vocalist **Kurt Elling** recently interpreted the 1963 album "John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman." While no one is about to forget the beloved original, Elling's idiosyncratic approach can be applauded for its sheer audacity. For this run, he'll be assisted by **Ernie Watts,** one of the great romantics of the tenor saxophone.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 16-21: The singer **Jane Monheit** mixes contemporary songs by the likes of Corinne Bailey Rae and Fiona Apple with familiar standards on her latest release, "The Lovers, the Dreamers and Me."

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through June 27: The legendary performer **Debbie Reynolds** makes her besequinned Café Carlyle début, mining her personal songbook for hits like "Tammy" and "Singin' in the Rain." These days, Reynolds is more of a talker than a singer, and she gleefully riffs on friends and rivals from her old Hollywood days, including, yes, Elizabeth Taylor, who she's pleased to remind us is "three months older than I am."

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 16-21: The **21st Century Band** features the drummer **Dion Parson,** the saxophonist **Ron Blake,** and the trumpeter **Terell Stafford.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 18-21: **The Geri Allen All-Stars.** The pianist Allen gets backing from the bona-fide stars **Ravi Coltrane,** on saxophone, and **Jeff (Tain) Watts,** on drums, along with the bassist **Joe Sanders,** a luminary in training.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 17: The assured saxophonist **Jerome Sabbagh** is joined by the bassist **Ben Street** and the drummer **Rodney Green.** June 18-21: **Dave Douglas's Brass Ecstasy** band positions the leader's trumpet amid French horn, trombone, tuba, and drums. The band's inclusively minded new album, "Spirit Moves," includes Douglas compositions alongside tunes associated with Hank Williams, Otis Redding, and Rufus Wainwright. June 23: The pianist **Emilio Solla's NY Tango Jazz Project** dispenses with a purist's approach to the Argentinean music. Among the band's daring improvisers are the saxophonist **Chris Cheek** and the virtuosic accordion player **Victor Prieto.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 16-21: The pianist **Renee Rosnes,** who came of age supporting Joe Henderson and other heavyweight saxophonists, has a formidable tenor player, **Rich Perry,** in her quartet here. The drummer **Lewis Nash** and the bassist **Peter Washington** round out the group. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul."** Opens June 23. ♦ **"Francis Bacon: A Centenary Retrospective."** This hardly modulated cadenza of a retrospective theatrically makes the case for the most theatrical of modern painters. From Bacon's early, gnashing monstrosities to his late figures, writhing in paroxysms of sex and/or death, he kept his outsized ambition and snarling attitude at full throttle. Problems abound, in an art rife with Expressionist pastiche and decorative longueurs. Is Bacon's burden an essence of twentieth-century existential anguish or a threnody of hungover grouches? His startling images, visceral brushwork, and inventive pictorial space make his troubles, whatever they are, troubles for us. A neutral response isn't possible. Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984."** Through Aug. 2. ♦ **"Roxy Paine on the Roof: Maelstrom."** Through Oct. 25. ♦ **"The Model as Muse: Embodying Fashion."** Through Aug. 9. ♦ **"Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages."** Through Aug. 23. ♦ **"African and Oceanic Art from the Barbier-Mueller Museum, Geneva: A Legacy of Collecting."** Through Aug. 23. ♦ **"Napoleon III and Paris."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

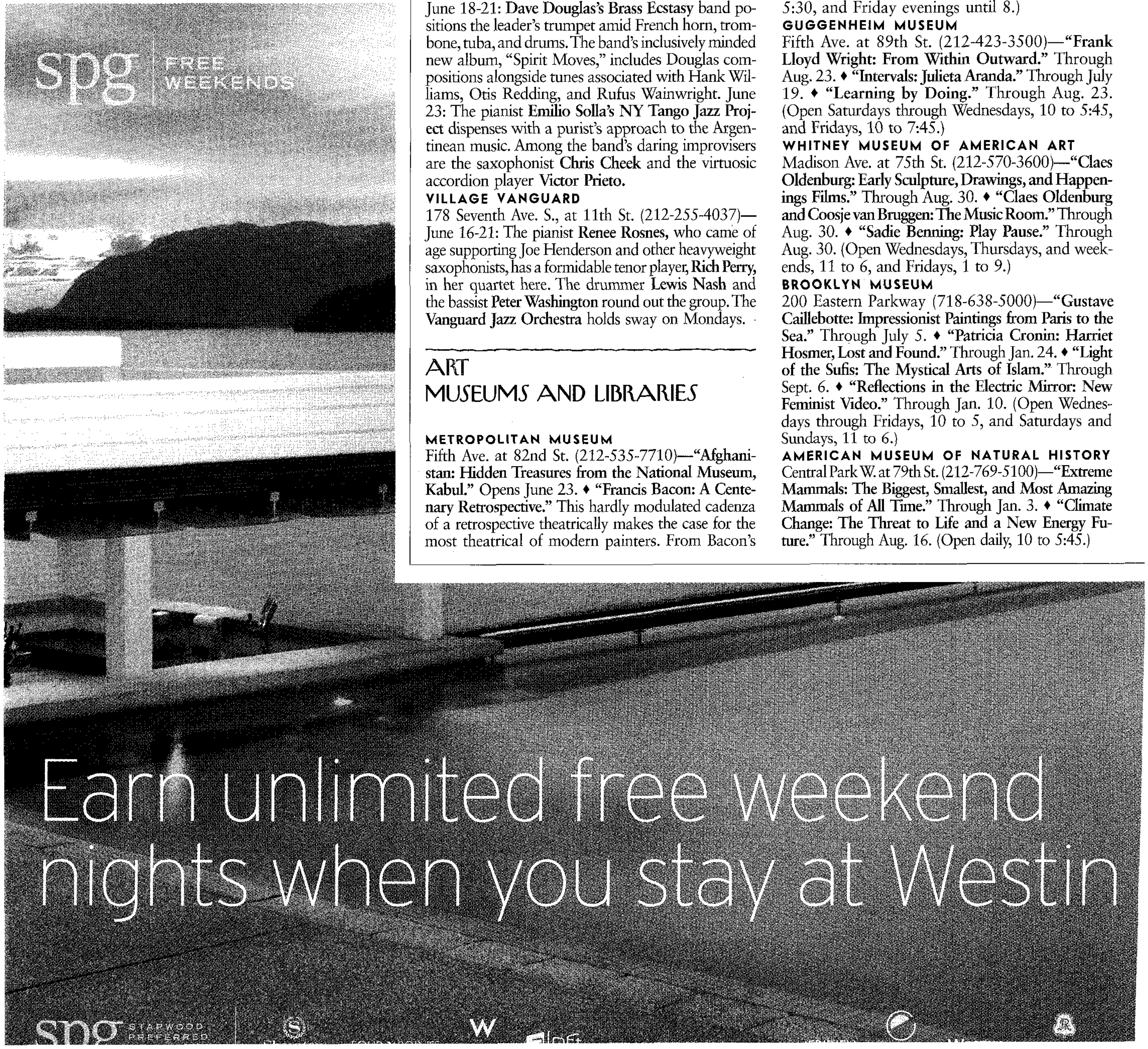
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Aernout Mik."** Through July 27. ♦ **"Projects 90: Song Dong."** Opens June 23. ♦ **"Looking at Music: Side 2."** Through Nov. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward."** Through Aug. 23. ♦ **"Intervals: Julieta Aranda."** Through July 19. ♦ **"Learning by Doing."** Through Aug. 23. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"Claes Oldenburg: Early Sculpture, Drawings, and Happenings Films."** Through Aug. 30. ♦ **"Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen: The Music Room."** Through Aug. 30. ♦ **"Sadie Benning: Play Pause."** Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Gustave Caillebotte: Impressionist Paintings from Paris to the Sea."** Through July 5. ♦ **"Patricia Cronin: Harriet Hosmer, Lost and Found."** Through Jan. 24. ♦ **"Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Reflections in the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video."** Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future."** Through Aug. 16. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)



AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**“Kaleidoscope Quilts: The Art of Paula Nadelstern.”** Through Sept. 13. ♦ **“The Treasures of Ulysses Davis.”** Through Sept. 6. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**“Yang Fudong: Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest.”** Through Sept. 13. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**“Living and Dreaming: The 39th ‘Artists in the Marketplace’ Exhibition.”** Opens June 21. ♦ **“Acconci Studio Lobby.”** Opens June 21. (Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—**“Isabel Toledo: Fashion from the Inside Out.”** Opens June 17. (Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**“Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in the Frick Collection.”** Through Aug. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**“Avedon Fashion 1944-2000.”** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **“David Seidner: Paris Fashions, 1945.”** Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**“Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker.”** Through Aug. 2. ♦ **“They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust.”** Part Marc Chagall, part Bruno Schulz—and even a little Maira Kalman—the artist (a.k.a. Mayer Kirshenblatt, born in 1916) provides a fascinating, humorous, and poignant record of Polish village life, in the years leading up to the Second World War. There are weddings (the marriage of the tailor’s pregnant hunchback daughter) and funerals (the Christian burial of the artist’s boyhood friend). An adulterer is discovered, zealous flagellants offer their backs for caning, and a “human fly” scales a local building. Incredibly, the artist, who emigrated to Canada in 1934, didn’t start painting until the age of seventy-three, and then only at the urging of his wife and daughter. Whether Kirshenblatt’s visual account is accurate or embellished hardly matters; it’s the remarkable results that count. Through Oct. 1. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**“Creating the Modern Stage: Designs for Theater and Opera.”** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **“Pages of Gold: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan.”** Opens June 19. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**“Dutch Seen: New York Rediscovered.”** Through Sept. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**“Kalup Linzy: If It Don’t Fit.”** Through June 28. ♦ **“Collected: Propositions on the Permanent Collection.”** Through June 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

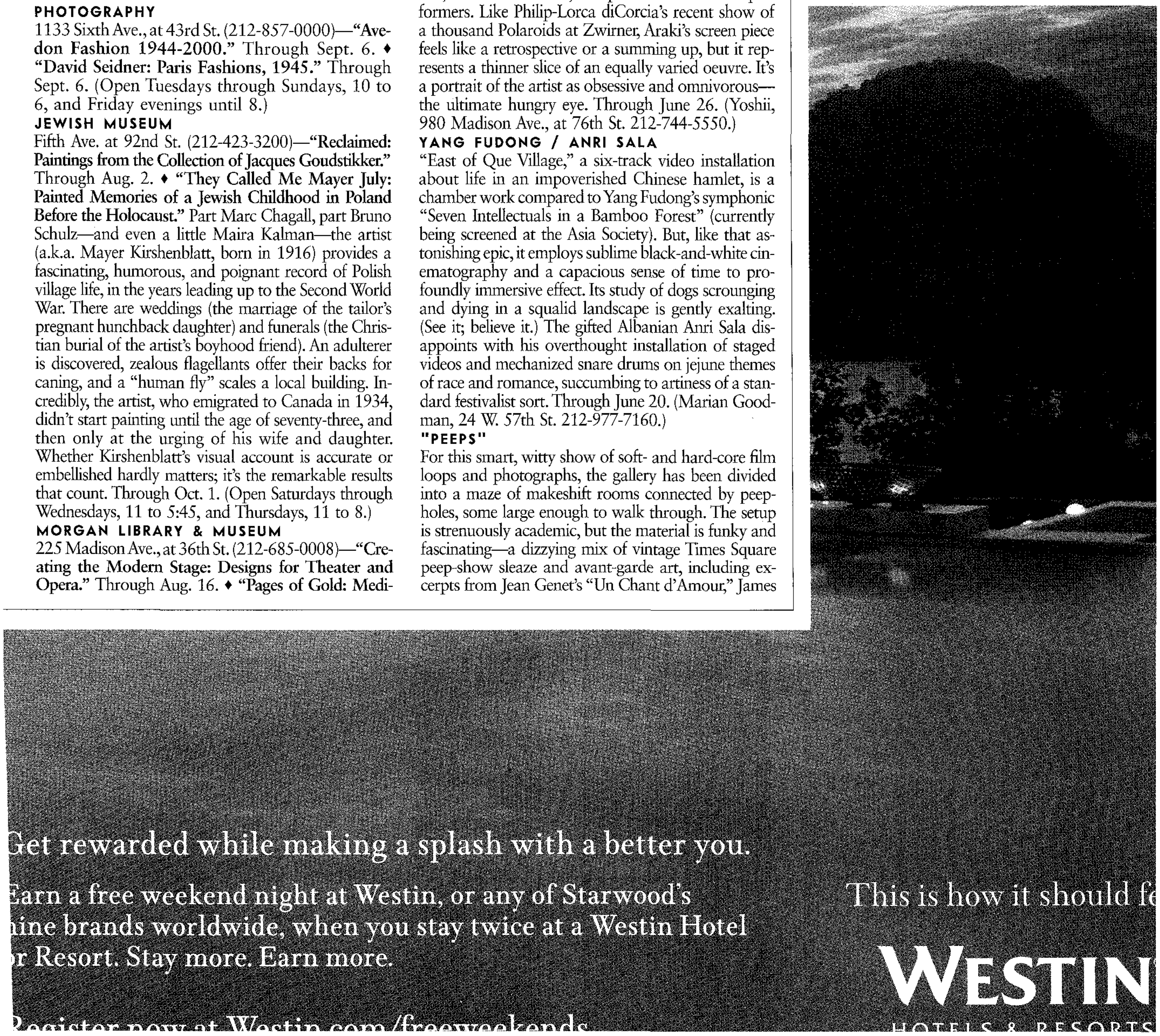
NOBUYOSHI ARAKI
The prolific Japanese photographer shows “A / Film,” a transparent wall that bisects this small gallery and sandwiches a thousand and fifty little color transparencies between two panes of glass. Arranged in seemingly random rows are images from Araki’s ongoing investigation of the female nude and women in bondage, along with flower studies, snowy landscapes, sunsets, domestic still-lifes, and portraits of karaoke performers. Like Philip-Lorca diCorcia’s recent show of a thousand Polaroids at Zwirner, Araki’s screen piece feels like a retrospective or a summing up, but it represents a thinner slice of an equally varied oeuvre. It’s a portrait of the artist as obsessive and omnivorous—the ultimate hungry eye. Through June 26. (Yoshii, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-5550.)

YANG FUDONG / ANRI SALA
“East of Que Village,” a six-track video installation about life in an impoverished Chinese hamlet, is a chamber work compared to Yang Fudong’s symphonic “Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest” (currently being screened at the Asia Society). But, like that astonishing epic, it employs sublime black-and-white cinematography and a capacious sense of time to profoundly immersive effect. Its study of dogs scrounging and dying in a squalid landscape is gently exalting. (See it; believe it.) The gifted Albanian Anri Sala disappoints with his overthought installation of staged videos and mechanized snare drums on jejune themes of race and romance, succumbing to artiness of a standard festivalist sort. Through June 20. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

"PEEPS"
For this smart, witty show of soft- and hard-core film loops and photographs, the gallery has been divided into a maze of makeshift rooms connected by peepholes, some large enough to walk through. The setup is strenuously academic, but the material is funky and fascinating—a dizzying mix of vintage Times Square peep-show sleaze and avant-garde art, including excerpts from Jean Genet’s “Un Chant d’Amour,” James Bidgood’s “Pink Narcissus,” and Andy Warhol’s “Poor Little Rich Girl.” Edie Sedgwick, vivacious in a bra and pantyhose, gets tough competition from a posse of anonymous, naked women and a few randy guys. Alvin Baltrop’s photographs of men cruising abandoned piers suggest that voyeurism and the directed gaze flourished outside the coin-operated arcades. Through July 12. (James Gallery, CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Ave., at 34th St. 212-817-7138.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MELANIE BONAJO
This Dutch artist takes photographs of nude women whose bodies are so encumbered with household junk that they’re reduced to sculptural supports. In what appear to be literal (and often hilarious) interpretations of women burdened by housework, Bonajo’s female subjects, whose faces are obscured, almost disappear beneath stepladders, wastepaper baskets, brooms, stools, mixing bowls, and the odd sprig of eucalyptus. With these household readymades lashed to their bodies, the women become one more commodity in a post-Pop assemblage. Bonajo, who calls the series “Fur-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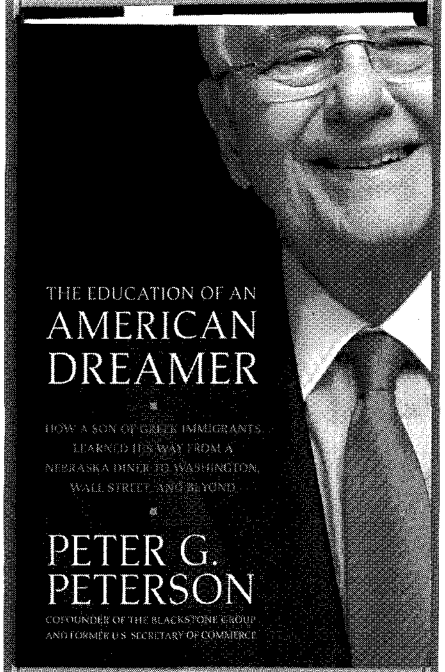
THE EDUCATION OF AN
AMERICAN DREAMER
HOW A SON OF GREEK IMMIGRANTS LEARNED HIS WAY FROM A NEBRASKA DINER TO WASHINGTON, WALL STREET, AND BEYOND
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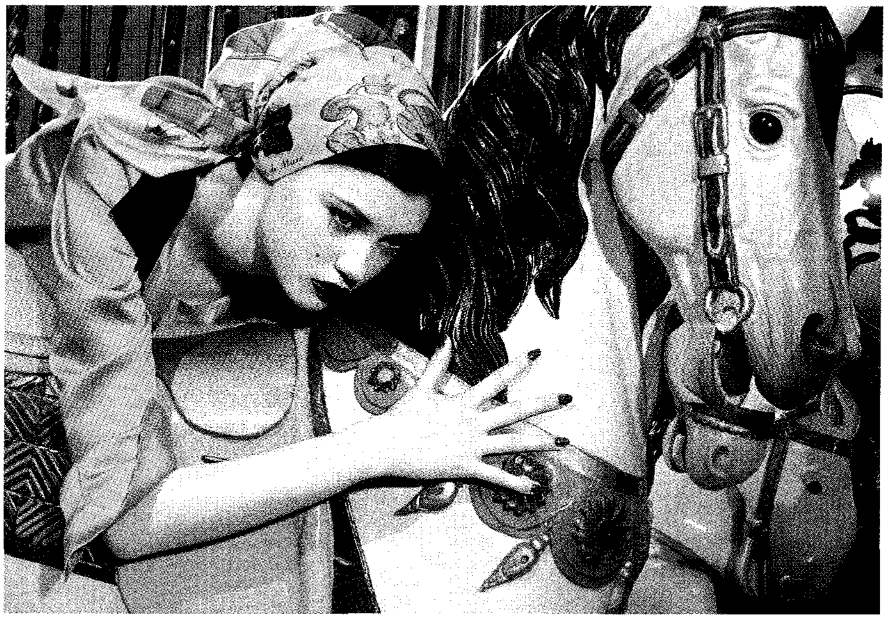
niture Bondage," teases the idea of metamorphosis and mocks the seductive pull of the material world. Through June 20. (P.P.O.W, 511 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

MARK FLOOD

The American painter dares viewers to take him seriously in an absurdist press release, which declares him "the least important German artist of the post-World War II period." There are some big, decorative abstract canvases, but most of the paintings ape signs; some are stencilled on flimsy silver-painted cardboard and herald (or hawk?) other works: "25 Additional Paintings," "2 More Paintings." There are also distorted portraits of celebrities, including Katie Couric, Anderson Cooper, and the cast of "Sex in the City." Subversion and showmanship merge, as do self-effacement and grandiosity. Flood isn't a genius, but his show is a hoot. Through July 10. (Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)


"Miles Aldridge: Pictures for Photographs," at Kasher through June 20.

JONATHAN MONK

"It must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh," Jesus remarked. The same may go for lame art jokes. Somebody was bound to reap jolly Schadenfreude from the recessionary devaluing of super-pricey goodies like Jeff Koons's iconic stainless-steel "Rabbit" (1986). The obvious tack would be to make stainless-steel variants of the balloon bunny in states of literal deflation. Monk has taken the obvious tack. The sculptures are desultory, as are some paintings of their fabrication. Woe. Through June 20. (Kaplan, 525 W. 21st St. 212-645-7335.)

CHARLES RAY

A legendary work by Ray, never before exhibited in public, may well be the damnedest thing you ever saw. "Ink Line" (1987) is a gleaming, almost imperceptibly rippling filament of printer's ink continuously falling from a tiny hole in the ceiling into a tiny hole in the floor. Hymning absolute verticality (guaranteed by gravity), absolute blackness, and minimalist presence in overdrive, it rivets and even somehow, serenely, terrifies. Two other early motorized Rays are also on view, and they're O.K. But resolve not to die before you have gotten a load of "Ink Line." Through June 27. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

"TRANSMUTATIONS: ABSTRACTION IN NATURE"

Five artists use photography both to record natural phenomena and to embody them. Setting his camera for long exposures, Chris McCaw allows the sun to literally burn an orbit path through his prints. Caleb Charland lets bacteria loose on photographic emulsion and preserves the gorgeous, marbelized results. Christian Erroi's images of vines and leaves on Plexiglas are delicate, calligraphic, and quietly eloquent. Yong Hee Kim's Polaroid-based images of the sun and Sebastian Lemm's black-and-white shots of intricately interwoven tree branches also stake out a territory between abstraction and representation. On the evidence of the work here, that's very fertile ground. Through June 20. (Mazzeo, 526 W. 26th St. 212-741-6599.)

Short List

MILES ALDRIDGE: Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through June 20. **PETER BEGLEY:** Zarre, 529 W. 20th St. 212-255-0202. Opens June 22. **CHUCK CLOSE:** Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through June 20. **TONY FEHER:** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460. Through June 20. **GAYLEN GERBER / JOE SCANLAN:** Wallspace, 619 W. 27th St. 212-594-9478. Through June 27. **ZARINA HASHMI:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Opens June 20. **CHRIS MARKER:** Peter Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055. Through July 31. **ALICE NEEL:** Zwirner, 533 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 20. **STEPHEN SHORE:** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through July 18. **BASIL WOLVERTON:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Opens June 20. **"SLOUGH":** Nolan, 527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190. Through June 27.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Thirty-four drawings, most made between 1950 and 1965, refresh one's eye for Giacometti's compulsive groping for truth in pictorial space. Whether portrait, figure, still-life, or interior, each subject struggles toward emotional focus through alternately hesitant and fierce flurries of line and erasure. In the small, swift, knotty "Portrait of Diego" (1958), in black crayon, the artist's brother takes form with the suddenness of a thunderclap. Giacometti's relative failures with less congenial subjects are dramatic—poignant and heroic—in their own right. Through June 27. (Freeman, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154.)

HILARY HARNISCHFEGER

When Robert Smithson wrote his essay "The Crystal Land," in 1966, he might have been cataloguing the qualities of Harnischfeger's irresistible wall reliefs: "Fragmentation, corrosion, decomposition, disintegration, rock creep debris, slides, mud flow, avalanche were everywhere in evidence." Lapidary abstractions roughly the size and shape of Byzantine icons—and the colors of twilight and dawn—are fashioned from paper, plaster, and ink and embedded with minerals (pyrite, green calcite, turquoise, rose quartz). Their intricate, stratified surfaces look less like handmade objects than like chimerical core samples—prized possessions in a twenty-first-century Wunderkammer. Through June 21. (Uffner, 47 Orchard St. 212-274-0064.)

Short List

ROCHELLE FEINSTEIN: APF Lab, 15 Wooster St. 212-966-0193. Through July 23. **FRANK HAINES:** Cooley, 34 Orchard St. 212-680-0564. Through July 3. **ANISSA MACK:** Small A Projects, 261 Broome St. 212-274-0761. Through July 2. **KATRÍN SIGURDARDÓTTIR:** Eleven Rivington, 11 Rivington St. 212-982-1930. Through July 3. **"MIRROR ME":** Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through July 30.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Fireflies and fairies take over the stage in the final week of the company's spring season. Balanchine's evening-length "Midsummer Night's Dream," from 1962, is a veritable feast, from the little girls with wings and the regal Titania to the incorrigible Puck, and, of course, Oberon, whose fleet-footed solo is one of the most thrilling in the ballet repertoire. ♦ June 16-17 at 7:30, June 18-19 at 8, June 20 at 2 and 8, and June 21 at 3: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
This week, the company revisits Paul Taylor's "Airs," a high-spirited, plotless suite of dances set to music by Handel. The other half of the bill is the magical "La Sylphide," the quintessential Romantic ballet staged by the great Danish danseur Erik Bruhn, in which a Scottish farmer—and dreamer—loses his heart to a wood nymph and pays the price. Look out for Xiomara Reyes and Herman Cornejo (Monday), Nina Ananiashvili (Tuesday and Thursday), and Natalia Osipova, the visiting sensation from the Bolshoi, partnered by David Hallberg (Wednesday evening). ♦ June 15-16 and June 18 at 7:30, June 17 at 2 and 7:30, June 19 at 8, and June 20 at 2 and 8: "Airs" and "La Sylphide." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 11.)

NAOMI GOLDBERG HAAS
Dances for a Variable Population, Haas's company of younger and older women, descends in dark sunglasses on the Whitehall Ferry Terminal for "Fanfare." Part of L.M.C.C.'s "Sitelines," the dance features a brassy score by Michael Nyman that plays off of Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man." (4 South St. 212-219-9401. June 15, June 17, June 19, and June 22 at 12:30 and 1:30. Through June 27.)

PHILADANCO
The vibrant dancers of this Philadelphia-based, predominantly African-American troupe return to the Joyce. The highlight will be a new work by the hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris, "Philadelphia Experiment," an exploration of the legacies of slavery and urban decay. The troupe will also perform "Enemy Behind the Gates," a vaguely militaristic piece set to Steve Reich's "The Four Sections," and a work by Camille Brown. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 16-17 at 7:30, June 18-19 at 8, June 20 at 2 and 8, and June 21 at 2 and 7:30.)

PAM TANOWITZ
Tanowitz presents an evening-length work, "Be in the Gray with Me," a sequence of solos, duets, and ensembles. Her distinguished performers include Christina Amendolia (a former Mark Morris dancer), Rashaun Mitchell (of Merce Cunningham), and Glen Rumsey (a choreographer and former Cunningham dancer). (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 18-20 at 7:30.)

"ACADEMY DANCES"
Twelve dancemakers associated with New York University's highly regarded Tisch dance program present their work. Thursday and Saturday's performances will include a solo created and danced by the venerable Gus Solomons, Jr., and a work by the ballet modernist (and department head) Cherylyn Lavagnino. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. June 18-20 at 8:30.)

NEW CHAMBER BALLET
Miro Magloire's company of excellent dancers—including an anomaly, a guy!—will perform two new works by Magloire and one by the company member and former New York City Ballet dancer Lauren Toole. As always, the music will be performed live. (City Center Studio 4, 130 W. 56th St. 212-868-4444. June 19-20 at 8.)

"SHIM SHAM"
Hosted by the venerable and portly Harold Cromer, who is equally a man of Broadway and a hoofer in the Harlem sense, the Kitchen's free tap jam should be more of a history lesson than usual, as well as more of a song-and-dance show. The responsive playing of the Theo Hill Trio is becoming a reason in itself to attend. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. June 22 at 8.)

KEIGWIN + COMPANY
"Triptych," Keigwin's short new suite, falls on the abstract end of his aesthetic. Driven by Jonathan Pratt's percussive score, the dancers slice through the stage space in formation or pause in poses; yet by the end, the parading and straight-armed semaphoring take on a militaristic tinge that's decidedly theatrical. Keigwin delightfully meets the challenge of a cast of fifty in "Bolero NYC"; the older "Natural Selection," gripping and breathtaking, and "Love Songs," tender and playful, are his best work to date. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 23 at 7:30. Through June 27.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
Dance in the Berkshires blooms again. A gala evening samples from the season, with performances by Andrea Miller's Gallim Dance; Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, whose July première of Sidi Larbi Cherkoaui's "Orbo Novo" is eagerly anticipated; and the world-class hoofer Jason Samuels Smith, whose talented troupe, Anybody Can Get It, hits the boards for two weeks in July. Other highlights of the summer include the American début of Fang-Yi Sheu's LAFA & Artists, along with Merce Cunningham and Doug Varone. (Ted Shawn, Beckett, Mass. 413-243-9919. June 20 at 6. Through Aug. 30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

ENCOMPASS NEW OPERA THEATRE: "THE THREE COMPANIONS"
Louis Gioia, a contemporary New York composer of verismo, has a history with Encompass, a longtime advocate for new American works; its next effort is the world première of this two-act opera (directed by Nancy Rhodes), based on an excerpt from "The Canterbury Tales"—properly called "I Tre Compagni," since the work will be performed in Italian, with English supertitles. Ulla Westland, Shannon DeVine, and Noah Stewart are the singing trio; Glen Cortese conducts. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-868-4444. June 19-20 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
With Lorin Maazel's tenure winding down at the Philharmonic, it's no surprise that he will be conducting some of his own music. "Monaco Fanfares" is pretty self-explanatory; "Farewells," an evocation of millennial anxiety in which "fragments of melody are menaced by orchestral violence," was commissioned by Maazel's good friends at the Vienna Philharmonic in 2000. The wave-like opening of Sibelius's serene and magisterial Symphony No. 2 in D Major, which closes the program, is evocative of the Italian seaside town of Rapallo, where it was begun. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. June 17-18 at 7:30 and June 20 at 8.)

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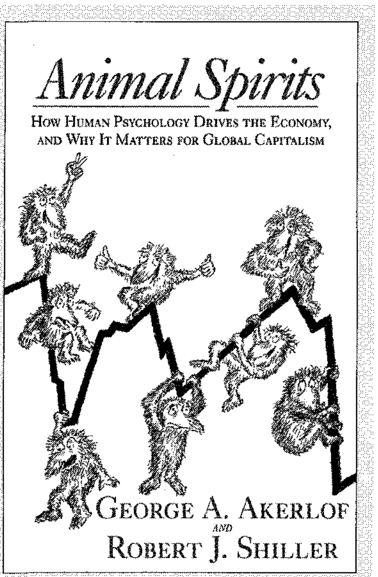
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NAUMBURG ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS
The popular summer series of free concerts in Central Park begins another season with a program offered by the vibrant young chamber orchestra the Knights and an exciting guest soloist, the violinist Lara St. John, performing concertos by Biber and Bach (including the Violin Concerto in E Major). (Naumburg Band Shell, mid-Park at 72nd St. June 23 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

RECITALS

INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL FOR CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE
Now in its sixth year, Marc Ponthus's festival at Mannes College offers a round of seminars and concerts from a firmly modernist perspective, delivered by renowned experts in the field. June 17 at 8: Joel Krosnick, the cellist of the Juilliard String Quartet, performs unaccompanied works by such masters as Donald Martino, Ralph Shapey, and Elliott Carter ("Figment No. 1"). (Mannes Concert Hall, 150 W. 85th St.) ♦ June 19 at 8: In another solo recital, the formidable violinist Rolf Schulte plays Stravinsky's "Élégie," Carter's "Rhapsodic Musings," Earl Kim's "Seven Caprices," and excerpts from works by Bartók and Kurtág. (Frederick Loewe Theatre, 35 W. 4th St.) ♦ June 22 at 8: Speculum Musicae, the admired contemporary ensemble, performs music by Peter Lieberson, Mario Davidovsky, and David Rakowski. (Mannes Concert Hall.) (Tickets at the door. For full schedule, see www.mannes.edu/ifcp.)

"DARMSTADT" INSTITUTE
This monthlong festival, named in tribute to (though not connected to) the legendary German "holiday course" for composers, devotes itself to avant-garde works, both recent and established. June 18 at 8: The third week includes a concert by the forthright guys of Tilt Brass, who offer an intense program that features music by Nick Didkovsky, Lois V. Vierk, Rhys Chatham ("Waterloo No. 2"), and Elliot Sharp. ♦ June 19 at 8: In an evening of modern classics, the ensemble Either/Or performs Morton Feldman's "Why Patterns?"; the pianist David Budin essays Stockhausen's "Klavierstuck IX." ♦ June 23 at 8: In a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the experimentalist publishing house Exact Change, such musicians as the vocalist Joan LaBarbara and the guitarists Loren Connors and Alan Licht will respond to texts by such giants as Kafka, Cage, Joseph Cornell, and Leonora Carrington. (Issue Project Room, 232 3rd St., Gowanus, Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. For full schedule, see www.issueprojectroom.org.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 19 at 8: A refreshingly unconventional classical schedule at the floating chamber-music series begins with a tribute to Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1882-1920), who, as convincingly as Ives, brought American late Romanticism into the modernist era. The flutist Gary Schocker, the baritone Robert Honeysucker, and the pianist Michael Lewin offer a selection of songs and chamber pieces featuring such works as the evocative Poem for Flute and Piano and the magnificent Piano Sonata. ♦ June 20 at 8 and June 21 at 3: Mozart—and the composers who love him—dominates the week's second program, in which the Voxare Quartet and the pianist Jeffrey Swann offer chamber versions of piano concertos by Mozart (No. 13 in C Major) and Chopin (No. 1 in E Minor), along with the Salzburg prodigy's "Adagio and Fugue" and Michael Nyman's "In Re Don Giovanni." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

WASHINGTON SQUARE MUSIC FESTIVAL: "THE SOLDIER'S TALE"
Washington Square Park has been undergoing reconstruction, but the cellist Lutz Rath's hardy summer series, more than fifty years old, perseveres, moving its headquarters to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church. In the final concert of the "Stravinsky Plus" series, Rath takes the role of the Devil in this enduring work of wartime satire, the capstone of a concert also featuring works by two composers who could not be more dissimilar to the Russian master—Brahms (the Piano Trio in C Major, Op. 87) and Schubert ("Shepherd on the Rock"). (371 Sixth Ave. June 19 at 8:30. No tickets required.)

"MAKE MUSIC NEW YORK"
For the third year in a row, hundreds of soloists and ensembles, both amateur and professional, in every genre from classical to pop, will concertize around the five boroughs in an eleven-hour (at least) escapade of musical creativity. Evening events include two performances at the Guggenheim Museum of Henry Brant's magnum opus "Orbits" (with eighty trombones) and the final "Mass Appeal" concert, at the Rumsey Playfield in Central Park, in which David Amram will conduct a throng of hundreds in a call-and-response jam session. (June 21, beginning at 11 A.M. For information and full schedule, see www.makemusicny.org.)

SIGNAL: STEVE REICH'S "DOUBLE SEXTET"
In two performances at (Le) Poisson Rouge, Brad Lubman conducts his expert young band in the work that recently won its composer a long-overdue—to put it mildly—Pulitzer Prize for Music. (158 Bleecker St. www.lprnyc.com. June 22 at 7:30 and 10.)

LEONORA ARMELLINI
The sixteen-year-old Italian piano phenom—already an artist of considerable taste—makes her New York début in a solo recital featuring such mainstays as Chopin's Sonata in B Minor, Schumann's "Carnaval," and Prokofiev's Sonata No. 3. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. June 23 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL: "THE CORONATION OF POPPEA"
No other organization on the East Coast performs Baroque music with the mastery and elegance of this distinguished series, which offers a run of concerts in Boston every spring. This year's Berkshires import is Monteverdi's deliciously lyrical final opera, a study of love and power written from an amoral point of view that is eternally surprising. Paul O'Dette and Steven Stubbs, as always, direct the ensemble; the cast features such singers as Gillian Keith and Marcus Ullmann. (Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, Mass. 413-528-0100. June 19-20 at 7 and June 21 at 2:30.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Now in its eightieth season, northern Connecticut's summer shrine to the art of the string quartet offers its concerts in a big, whitewashed New England box of a hall that offers fine acoustics. Its first regular concert of the season is an afternoon with the well-regarded Arianna String Quartet, which performs works by Mendelssohn, Janáček (the Quartet No. 2, "Intimate Letters"), and Dvořák (the String Quintet in G Major, with the bassist Timothy Cobb). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 21 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

DEAD SNOW
A horror comedy about Nazi zombies, directed by Tommy Wirkola. In Swedish. Opening June 19. (In limited release.)

THE END OF THE LINE
A documentary, directed by Rupert Murray, about the threat to sea life caused by overfishing. Opening June 19. (Cinema Village.)

$9.99
An animated adaptation of stories by the Israeli writer Etgar Keret, directed by Tatia Rosenthal. Opening June 19. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE PROPOSAL
In this comedy, an executive (Sandra Bullock) seeks to avoid deportation by marrying her assistant (Ryan Reynolds). Directed by Anne Fletcher. Opening June 19. (In wide release.)

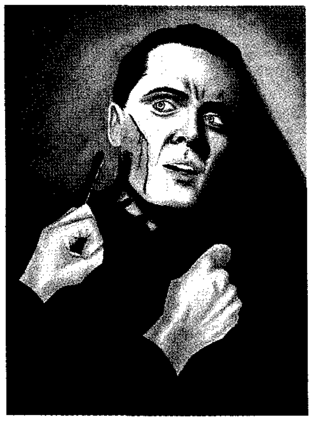
UNDER OUR SKIN
A documentary about the prevalence of Lyme disease, directed by Andy Abrahams Wilson. Opening June 19. (IFC Center.)

WHATEVER WORKS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 19. (In limited release.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GREENE PASTURES

Few good writers have been adapted with greater frequency or distinction than Graham Greene, and the 1947 version of his novel "Brighton Rock" (screening at Film Forum June 19-25) is one of the strongest of these films. The picture, set amid the forced gaiety and furtive carnality of the British sea resort, is dominated by the young Richard Attenborough, who plays Pinky, a teen-age gangster in a suit and rakish hat. Greene, a Catholic writer, believed literally in sin, Hell, and redemption, and Attenborough, silent, calculating, pale, and unblinking (his eyes were a great acting tool), offers one of the cinema's most convincing embodiments of paranoia and violence. Adapted by Greene and Terrence Rattigan and directed by John Boulting (part of the brother team that later made comedies), "Brighton Rock" combines religious themes with the sordid desperation of petty gangsters. There are some classic sequences and a fine performance by Hermione Baddeley as the raucous old music-hall performer who is on to Pinky's bad intentions.

—*David Denby*



DIVYA SRINIVASAN

THE WINDMILL MOVIE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 17. (Film Forum.)

YEAR ONE
Jack Black and Michael Cera star in this comedy, as cavemen who are exiled from their village. Directed by Harold Ramis. Opening June 19. (In wide release.)

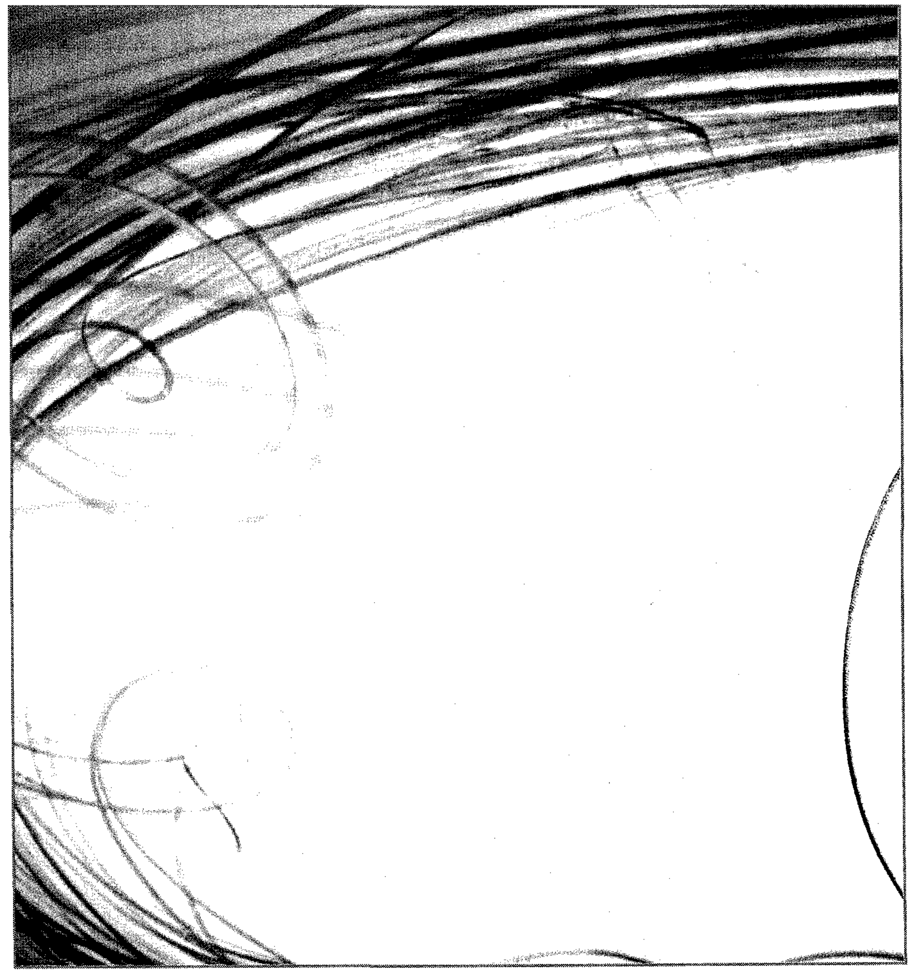
NOW PLAYING

ANGELS & DEMONS
More drivel from Dan Brown's fictions, adapted by Ron Howard and the screenwriters Akiva Goldsman and David Koepp, and starring Tom Hanks as the Harvard "symbologist" Dr. Robert Langdon. There's the reliable old garbage of secret societies, insignias, codes, tombs, rats, rotting corpses, and uncanny inscriptions. There are fire and torment, unspeakable practices dwelled on at length. And there are puzzles and potted bits of art history, bristling with unexpected interest. It seems that great paintings and statues play a leading role in ancient webs of conspiracy. Da Vinci knew Vatican secrets; so did Raphael. (Brown doesn't bother with minor artists.) Essentially, it's a treasure hunt, with each work of art containing a clue that leads our hero to rush to the other side of Rome, where he discovers a cardinal who has just been murdered. With Ayelet Zurer as an Italian physicist who accompanies Langdon on the hunt. Shot largely on sets built in Los Angeles.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/25/09.) (In wide release.)

AWAY WE GO
Sam Mendes, working with a script by the husband-and-wife novelists Dave Eggers and Vendela Vida, has created a movie very different in tone from "American Beauty," "Road to Perdition," and "Revolutionary Road," all of which tended to imprison their American characters in restrictive visual schemes. This movie is free and easy, almost ruminative in tone, like something from the early seventies. A loving but unmarried couple in their early thirties, Burt (John Krasinski) and Verona (Maya Rudolph), who is pregnant, struggle to figure out who they are and what they want. They travel around the country in an old Volvo, visiting friends and relatives. The vignettes are both funny and touching. With Allison Janney as a raucous alcoholic who screams at her kids, Maggie Gyllenhaal as a pushy New Age mother whose virtue saps everyone's strength, and many, many others.—*D.D.* (6/8 & 15/09) (In wide release.)

BUNNY LAKE IS MISSING
At first contact with an electric guitar, Otto Preminger, born in 1906, got a shock, which he conveys in this jangled psychological thriller from 1965, set in swinging London. A young American woman, Ann Lake (Carol Lynley), has just arrived with her journalist brother, Steven (Keir Dullea), and her four-year-old daughter, who seems to have vanished on her first day of school, although nobody—neither teachers nor students nor, for that matter, viewers—have seen her. The investigation by the dapper, ironic Superintendent Newhouse (Laurence Olivier) and his imputations regarding Ann's sanity take over the story, but the film's real charge lies elsewhere—in Preminger's view of a jolting, disoriented age. The mental chaos of the times is reflected in the behavior of the local solipsistic eccentrics (including a randy raconteur, played by Noël Coward), the nightmarish images, the backdrop of student protest and political crisis, and the frenzied soundtrack, which features the music of the Zombies.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; June 18-19.)

LE COMBAT DANS L'ÎLE
Alain Cavalier's 1961 political drama, produced by Louis Malle, is a stacked deck of political pieties. Clément (Jean-Louis Trintignant), the Parisian playboy son of a coldhearted industrialist, is in every way a son of a bitch: a clandestine right-wing paramilitary agent, he abuses and subjugates his wife, Anne (Romy Schneider), an actress he bars from the stage, and treats blacks and foreigners contemptuously. When he goes on the lam after participating in an assassi-



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nation plot, Anne takes up with his long-lost friend, Paul (Henri Serre), a good-humored rustic printer of fine books and union tracts that he helps to edit, who coaxes her back onstage by means of an unpublished play by his late wife. The plot is as contrived and mechanical as it sounds; the dialogue is thin; the images, flavorless. Only some street views of Paris and brief glimpses of night life are vibrant, and the potentially moving subplot of Anne's comeback gets its sole energy from the vulnerable performance of the sombre-eyed Schneider. The story suggests a politically correct revision of Jean-Luc Godard's "Le Petit Soldat," and an explicit allusion to the hotel where Godard shot part of "Breathless" makes clear the target Cavalier and Malle are aiming at. They miss. In French.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; June 17-18.)

DRAG ME TO HELL

As if apologizing for the mess that is "Spider-Man 3," the director Sam Raimi returns to his low-budget horror roots in this playful and relentlessly scary story about a bank clerk (Alison Lohman) who's cursed by an old woman (the aptly named Lorna Raver) after she's denied an extension of her mortgage loan. The film is packed with spooky set pieces that rumble convincingly (the use of wind, shadow, and sound is impeccable), and the over-the-top slimefest makes for a series of hilarious gross-out spectacles. Although more economical storytelling might have given the movie more of a rush at the finish line, it's still a mightily maniacal piece of work.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

FOOD, INC.

Robert Kenner's socially minded documentary examines the origins of the processed food that's found on supermarket shelves and suggests what giant multinational food corporations are concealing from the public. Loosely based on the work of the activist writers Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan, the film is divided into chapters (the manipulation of corn crops, politically motivated subsidies, the mentality of product uniformity), and some sections are more successful than others (almost all the food corporations denied the filmmaker access to their facilities). But through the use of hidden cameras and interviews with former food-industry employees, Kenner manages to reveal chemical manipulations and genetic modifications that have taken hold in the industrial food chain, and reveals the mess that some powerful lobbies have made of the F.D.A. His film is a disturbing and anger-inducing look at corporate irresponsibility and a business that's in grave need of repair.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE

In Steven Soderbergh's latest low-budget experiment, Chelsea (Sasha Grey), a high-priced call girl, and Chris (Chris Santos), a personal trainer, live together, selling intimacies and friendship to their clients as the city's high-flying financial world begins to collapse (the movie was shot in the fall of 2008). Set in the amber bars and gleaming boutique hotels of lower Manhattan, the movie, written by David Levien and Brian Koppelman, might have worked as a satirical observation of time and place if Sasha Grey seemed even halfway alive, but Grey, a real-life porn star who has intellectual pretensions, comes off as affectless and withdrawn. Soderbergh, giving her closeup after closeup (he shot the film himself), seems to have been mesmerized by her haughty self-regard; he gets nothing out of her. With the film critic Glenn Kenny in an amusing turn as a lecherous guy who grades escort services on the Web, and the writer Mark Jacobson as a reporter interviewing Chelsea. He doesn't get anything out of her either.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

THE HANGOVER

Three friends (Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms, and Zach Galifianakis) have to reconstruct, after an alcohol-induced group memory loss, a wild bachelor party where they lost the groom (Justin Bartha). After waking up in a trashed Las Vegas suite, the three lead characters come across a host of madcap surprises on their way to solving the mystery, and their director (Todd Phillips) has a natural, unfussy style that allows the actors plenty of room to riff energetically through their parts (Cooper is especially good). The movie's episodic nature is not perfect (there's a fey Asian gambler who's the brunt of cheap gags), but what makes this bromance work is the performers' contagious camaraderie. With a sunny Heather Graham sweetening the mix.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

A satiric celebration of anarchic youth and a blast of oxygen for a wheezing kingdom. The director, Richard Lester, and the screenwriter, Alun Owen, set out

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TABLES FOR TWO
LA FONDA DEL SOL

tapas
espuinas

HONORÉ BROWN

200 Park Ave., entrance on Vanderbilt Ave. at 44th St. (212-867-6767)—The Spaniard thinks little of the Spanish cuisine he has found in New York, or anywhere, really, outside of his native Madrid, which, he insists, is the most authentic of Spanish cities, and the place to go for the freshest ingredients. He is tired of hearing Americans say that they prefer Barcelona. Fortunately for his dining companions, regional chauvinism does not come into play at La Fonda del Sol, which is so broadly Spanish ("modern") as to include accents of old colonies and rival powers. The chef, Josh DeChellis, who was born in Colombia and reared in New Jersey, achieved mixed results with other national cuisines at other restaurants, but seems to have found his muse.

La Fonda del Sol, above Grand Central Terminal, is a revival, in name only, of the old kitschy Joe Baum Latin emporium in the Time-Life Building. It has a casual, airy bar area for tapas—if it is reminiscent of an airport lounge, as some have remarked, then it is more like one at the soaring new Richard Rogers terminal at Barajas—and a formal dining room, with Iberian maroons and arty photographs of matadors.

Authenticity, as per Spain, would require a late dinner, but, as per Manhattan, would rule out such proximity to Grand Central so deep into the evening. The Spaniard, therefore, agreed to a leisurely lunch. Judging the *jamón* to be merely decent, he said, "I have fantastic *jamón* from Madrid in my home. You are welcome to come over." Appetizers of octopus (buttery tentacular nickels atop potato pesetas) and razor clams (sprinkled with chorizo) were textural marvels. Among the tapas, the genuine blandness of the salt-cod *croquetas* helped ameliorate the goutiness brought on by a rich little pot of duckling, pork, and sherry, and, from the next round, lamb dressed with hot peppers and roasted on a bed of grass from the field in which the lamb once grazed. The dinner version of this dish is stewed in yogurt made with the milk of the lamb's mother. (We call it . . . the Aristocrats!) Far into a fine Rioja, the Spaniard, pining for a nap but condemned to an Anglo-Saxon law-office afternoon, rued the absence on the menu of a delicacy called *mollejas*—sweetbreads. Still, he rated the meal an eight out of ten. "Pretty high for New York, yes?" (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $24-$39.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

to show how the Beatles' phenomenal fame encased them in a cocoon. But the Fab Four aren't larvae—they're brilliant butterflies, and they have an unsurpassed rapport with their fans and with the movie audience. Lester directs fearlessly, shooting them every which way to capture their antic poetry. The nonchalant iconoclast John Lennon "snorts" a Coke bottle; Paul McCartney, in a bowler hat and fake beard, clowns like an aristocratic elf. Ringo Starr becomes the group's hangdog mascot, George Harrison its pocket of moodiness. Wilfrid Brambell provides delightful counterpoint as Paul's grandfather, a "clean old man." Lester devised strategies for making rock visual that music-video directors have been stealing for decades. In one of the most glorious musical numbers in movie history, the Beatles break out of their keepers' care and zigzag through a field to the tune of "Can't Buy Me Love." Released in 1964.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; June 17 and June 20.)

IL DIVO

An elegant reunion for Paolo Sorrentino and Toni Servillo, the director and the star of "The Consequences of Love." In this case, the phlegmatic Servillo plays Giulio Andreotti—seven times Prime Minister of Italy, and an inextinguishable force at the heart of the country's politics. Try to imagine Nosferatu on the threshold of the Vatican and you come close to the bewitching figure that Servillo delivers here; he appears to glide rather than walk, to scorn minor sins in favor of larger conspiracy, and to taste each occurrence (even when it threatens his own position) for its comic savor. By the end, you can't say you know him, but you can't get enough of him, either. The movie that spins around him feels, perhaps unavoidably, less refined; Sorrentino flourishes the secondary characters in style, but he allows the complexities of parliamentary scheming—and of Andreotti's reputed links to the Mafia—to splinter into fast, unmanageable fragments. If we can't hope to be enlightened, he seems to suggest, we might as well be dazed and confused. In Italian.—*Anthony Lane* (5/4/09) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN

The plot is nominal. It's barely a premise; it's more like a shelter. Ben Stiller is back together with his beloved stuffed and wax figures and other statues, miniatures, and artifacts—only not at the American Museum of Natural History this time, but in the basement of the Smithsonian (which includes a mockup of the National Gallery). After dark, the figures come to life, and the result is pretty much a free-form traffic jam in which everyone fights everyone else. There is, however, the great Hank Azaria as the wannabe Egyptian pharaoh Kahmunrah. His powerful arms emerging from his battle dress, Azaria, channelling Boris Karloff, speaks in a prissy, vaguely English accent, and with a lisp. When people insist on calling his war costume a dress, he becomes agitated. "It's a tunic," Azaria says, irritably shaking his fly-whisk sceptre, or *nekhakha*. "Tunic."—*D.D.* (6/8 & 15/09) (In wide release.)

SÉRAPHINE

One of the loveliest and most sombre fables of a lonely artist's ecstasy. Séraphine Louis (Yolande Moreau), a stolid housekeeper in the old town of Senlis, north of Paris, paints secretly at night in her room. A fastidious German-born art dealer and critic, Wilhelm Uhde (Ulrich Tukur), in retreat from Paris, discovers her before the First World War and champions her work as "modern primitivism." The movie, based on a true story, has been made with great respect for the privacy of this odd pairing, but it doesn't sidestep Uhde's emotional difficulties as a gay man or Séraphine's enthralled immersion in nature, her pride and isolation, and her eventual insanity. The colors are on the sober side; the pace is even, slow, weighted, and very satisfying. The writer-director Martin Provost wants us to feel what Séraphine feels when the wind strikes her face. The cinematography is by Laurent Brunet; the movie won seven Césars.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

STAR TREK

A new beginning, of sorts, for a franchise whose vision of the future seemed lost in the past. The director, J. J. Abrams, warps back to the early days not only of Kirk (Chris Pine) and Mr. Spock (Zachary Quinto) but of the U.S.S. Enterprise herself. Kirk overcomes his rebellious streak—signalled very clearly, for the hard of understanding—to take command of the ship as she flames into combat against the spidery craft of Captain Nero (Eric Bana), who has already jump-started the movie by wiping out Kirk's dad. There is no shortage of time-leaps here, including a jumbled subplot about what might have happened, which involves a longish cameo from a cadaverous Leonard Nimoy. (It's unclear whether non-devout viewers will relish his presence, given that Quinto does such a serene and thoughtful job.) The action scarcely halts for breath, let alone for common sense, and the scene of a ship-to-planet free fall already ranks among the treasures of the headlong; what the movie gains in ardor and cockiness, however, it loses in charm, and the result is much easier to gawp at than to love. With Bruce Greenwood, the nimble-witted Simon Pegg (in the role of Scotty), and a graying Winona Ryder as Spock's mother—how old does that make you feel?—*A.L.* (5/18/09) (In wide release.)

SUMMER HOURS

A woman in her seventies (Edith Scob), the niece and possibly the lover of a deceased French painter, dies in her home outside Paris, and her three adult children, who grew up there, have to decide what to do with the house, the Art Nouveau furniture, and the paintings by Corot and other artists which they have always lived with. Two of the children, riding the surf of global capitalism, have made lives elsewhere. Watching Olivier Assayas's new film, we realize pretty quickly that the house is France itself—cultivated, beautiful, but powerless in the global era. But what will happen if the house is sold, the collection given to the Musée d'Orsay, the memories dissipated? Is it a tragedy? In the end, Assayas, shooting the film with relaxed, flowing camera movements, gives his love not to objects but to the disorderly life out of which art is made. With Charles Berling, Jérémie Renier, and Juliette Binoche, as the three children. In French.—*D.D.* (5/25/09) (In limited release.)

THE TAKING OF PELHAM 1 2 3

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

TERMINATOR SALVATION

The title is unfortunate, giving the impression—which is more than borne out by the film—that something must be done to save the franchise. The rescue attempt is hindered, not helped, by the efforts of the director, McG, and his writers, John D. Brancato and Michael Ferris, all of whom, together with the star, Christian Bale, assume that the project is one of the utmost solemnity; anything approaching a laugh, or even fun, is gunned down without remorse. Bale plays John Connor, the leader of the human resistance against the wicked techno-reign of Skynet. Other fighters include Connor's father (Anton Yelchin), a resurrected killer from the past (Sam Worthington), and a child sidekick (Jadagrace) who is cute, mute, and of no use whatsoever to the plot. Bryce Dallas Howard plays Connor's pregnant squeeze, thus adding to the list of roles that waste her bewitching skills. As with the previous film in the series, the one engaging scene is a chase involving high speeds and heavy machinery; the rest of the tale is a slog, and even the Terminators look as if they could do with a fresh set of batteries and an oil check. With a brief cameo by a C.G.I. version of Arnold Schwarzenegger; or maybe this *is* him, and the virtual one is governing California.—*A.L.* (6/1/09) (In wide release.)

TETRO

Francis Ford Coppola's intense personal investment in the subject of this drama, set in Argentina, is its strength as well as its big problem. He clearly cares deeply about the title character (Vincent Gallo), a writer living in Buenos Aires, who had been the darling, and is now the whipping boy, of a dominant local critic. Tetro's girlfriend says he's "like a genius but without enough accomplishments," and he has settled into a freewheeling but unsatisfying routine of bohemian turmoil. The arrival of his long-lost younger brother, Benny (Alden Ehrenreich, a pale and determined young man reminiscent of Leonardo DiCaprio), conjures up the bad memories of earlier family life that caused Tetro to travel far and refuse contact. But the emergence of dark secrets goes hand in hand with an ar-

tistic breakthrough, a triumphant comeback, emotional healing, and family reconciliation. The element of wish fulfillment is inescapable: Coppola-the-director's intense emotional command of actors and scenes is overwhelmed by Coppola-the-writer's dictates, which are both closed off to outer reality and deal all too obliquely, allusively, and selectively with the filmmaker's own identity and history. The result is a work that is both frustratingly hermetic and strangely impersonal. In English and Spanish.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

24 CITY

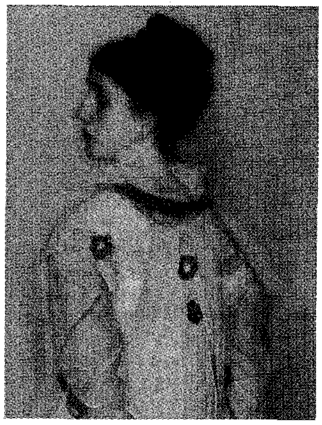
Upon hearing that a vast industrial complex in Chengdu was being torn down to make way for a high-rise compound of apartments and office buildings, the Chinese director Jia Zhangke recognized the event's element of high drama. Blending fiction and documentary, interviewing several retired workers and scripting faux interviews with other characters, he brings huge stretches of long-repressed history to life on an intimate scale. Earlier generations' unfathomable hardships emerge (as when an elderly woman recounts losing her child in a crowd and being forced aboard a work transport by "comrades") as veiled accusations against the system that is responsible for them. The pleasure of retirees singing kitschy Communist songs contrasts painfully with the benumbed uniformity that afflicts them still. Yet the workers' descendants, young individualists who rejected factory labor in favor of becoming a real-estate developer, a TV commentator, or a personal shopper, come off as no more fulfilled, in an age in which the tight margins of Chinese freedom are reserved for profit. Jia, filming with a calm, probing ruefulness, quietly unlocks the floodgates of memory as a crucial first step toward personal and political liberation. With Joan Chen, as a factory worker who is said by her colleagues to resemble the actress Joan Chen. In Mandarin.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

UP

A grouchy old guy, Carl Fredricksen (voiced by Ed Asner), balloons attached to his house, flies off to the South American wilderness, with an unwanted stowaway aboard—a little round-faced chubby Wilderness Explorer in shorts, Russell (Jordan Nagai), who is afraid of nothing. This animated comedy from Pixar

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
RETURN ENGAGEMENT

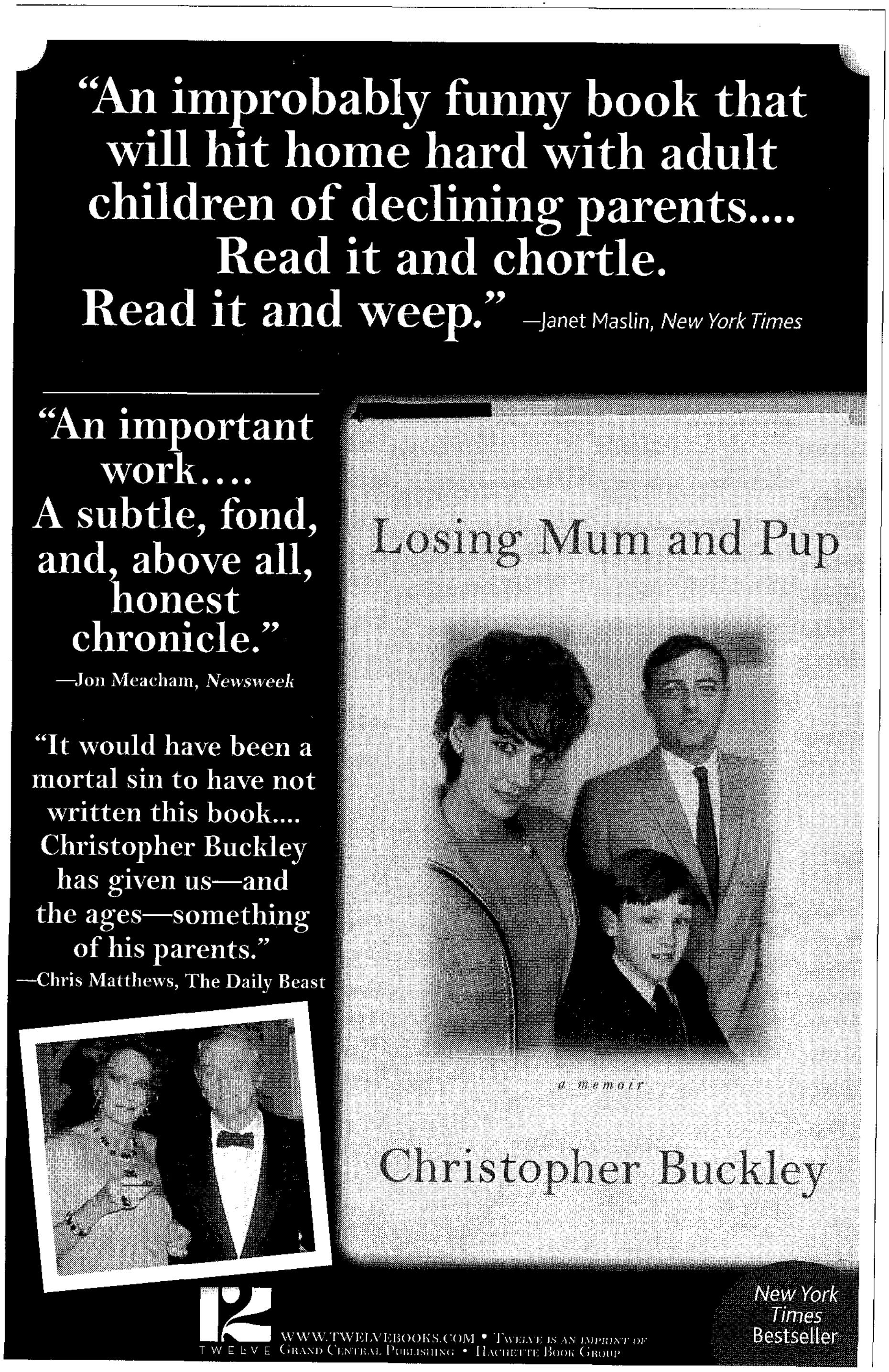
The Frick Collection has its nuclear core back, briefly. James Abbott McNeill Whistler's full-length portraits of three ladies and a gent have returned, after two decades in debilitating company nearby, to the Oval Room, where they hung



when the museum opened, in 1935, and where they belong. In perfect scale and synergistic splendor, the paintings—"Harmony in Pink and Grey," "Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink," "Arrangement in Brown and Black," and "Arrangement in Black and Gold"—solemnize the civil union of art and decoration that is a cynosure of the Frick. Like a visual tuning fork, Whistler's potent aestheticism resonates throughout the collection, with Velázquez, Rembrandt, and even Fragonard, another magus of sheer felicity. Frick bought more Whistlers than works by any other artist. One of them, a nice but anticlimactic seascape, now takes the former place, in the Oval Room, of Jean-Antoine Houdon's terra-cotta "Diana the Huntress," which should come back, too, to stay. The Whistlers will return to internal exile on August 23, for some dull reason.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER, DETAIL FROM "SYMPHONY IN FLESH COLOUR AND PINK: PORTRAIT OF MRS FRANCES LEYLAND" (1871–74)



"An improbably funny book that will hit home hard with adult children of declining parents.... Read it and chortle. Read it and weep." —Janet Maslin, *New York Times*

"An important work.... A subtle, fond, and, above all, honest chronicle." —Jon Meacham, *Newsweek*

"It would have been a mortal sin to have not written this book.... Christopher Buckley has given us—and the ages—something of his parents." —Chris Matthews, The Daily Beast

Losing Mum and Pup

a memoir

Christopher Buckley

New York Times Bestseller

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is being distributed in both 2D and 3D versions; the third dimension adds palpability to the characters. Carl has a square, blocky head and a blocky body; the boy has a circular face with a bump for nose. Neither of them is very big, but they look solid, weighted. When the characters fly through their air, the space becomes an actual medium, not a dead zone. The team of Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, who wrote and directed, keep their eye on the story and on the bond between the old man and the boy. For them, 3D is a narrative tool, a delightful enhancement of what had to be strong to begin with, or it wouldn't work. Warmly emotional, the movie is also filled with inexplicably funny jokes. A complete triumph, even an instant classic.—*D.D.* (6/8 & 15/09) (In wide release.)

THE WINDMILL MOVIE
The filmmaker and teacher Richard Rogers worked for decades on a film about himself—in particular, about his frustrations with his upper-class Wasp family, as well as with himself, for not having become as successful a filmmaker—or family man—as he wanted to be. Rogers died in 2001, and his widow, the photographer Susan Meiselas, asked Alexander Olch, one of his former students, to go through the two hundred hours of footage and see what could be made of it. The resulting act of devotion, loyalty, and love yielded a film as warmhearted and unequivocal—and undemanding and unquestioning—as a eulogy. Olch fills out Rogers's self-portrait by writing and delivering a fictional voice-over, which contrasts sadly with Rogers's own lucid and poignant voice. Rogers's artistic self-criticism was painfully accurate, but he persevered valiantly nonetheless; he recognized his need to escape his family but remained tethered to it anyway. Olch never gets past the surface of the story; his affectionate fealty is a sort of emotional blackmail. This story demands a level of insight—or of candor—beyond what Olch displays.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

Also Playing

BETTY BLUE: Cinema Village. **IMAGINE THAT:** In wide release. **MOON:** In wide release. **MY LIFE IN RUINS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In revival. June 17-18 at 7 and 9: "Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World?" (1932, Slatan Dudow). ♦ Special screenings. June 18 at 7:30: Short films by Peter Cramer, Jack Waters, and Marc Arthur, including "Undetectable in Berlin" (2009). ♦ June 19 at 7:30: Short films by Sandra Davis, Program 1. ♦ June 20 at 7:30: Short films by Davis, Program 2. ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 20 at 5:30: Films by Christopher Maclaine, including "The End" (1953). ♦ June 21 at 5:30: Films by George and Mike Kuchar, including "The Naked and the Nude" (1957). ♦ June 21 at 7:30: Films by Sidney Peterson, including "Mr. Frenhoffer and the Minotaur" (1949).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through July 2: "BAMCinemaFEST." June 17 at 7:30: "Don't Let Me Down" (2008, Cruz Angeles). ♦ June 18 at 6:30 and June 20 at 3:15: "Children of Invention" (2008, Tze Chun). ♦ June 18 at 9:30 and June 24 at 6:30: "Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be the Same" (2009, Jody Lee Lipes). ♦ June 19 at 6:30 and June 22 at 9:30: "Big Fan" (2008, Robert Siegel). ♦ June 19 at 9:30 and June 23 at 6:30: "You Won't Miss Me" (2009, Ry Russo-Young). ♦ June 20 at 6 and June 21 at 12:30: "Humpday" (2009, Lynn Shelton). ♦ June 20 at 9: "In the Loop" (2008, Armando Iannucci). ♦ June 21 at 3:30 and June 23 at 9:30: "Everything Strange and New" (2009, Frazer Bradshaw). ♦ June 21 at 6:15: "Beeswax" (2009, Andrew Bujalski). ♦ June 21 at 9: "Bronson" (2008, Nicolas Winding Refn). ♦ June 22 at 6:30: "The Glass House" (2008, Hamid Rahmanian).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 17-18 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Le Combat dans l'Île" (†). ♦ June 19-25 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Brighton Rock" (1947, John Boulting).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 17 at 4: "Regret to Inform" (1998, Barbara Sonneborn; in English and Vietnamese). ♦ June 17 at 6:30 and June 18 at 9: "Remnants of a War" (2009, Jawad Metni; in English and Arabic). ♦ June 17 at 8:45: "In the Holy Fire of Revolution" (2008, Masha Novikova; in Russian). ♦ June 18 at 4: "Born Into Brothels" (2003, Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman; in Bengali and English). ♦ June 18 at 6:30: "New Muslim Cool" (2009, Jennifer Maytorena). ♦ June 19 at 4: "Jung: In the Land of the Mujaheddin" (2000, Alberto Vendemmiati and Fabrizio Lazzaretti; in Dari and Italian). ♦ June 19 at 9:15 and June 20 at 4: "Back Home Tomorrow" (2008, Lazzaretti and Paolo Santolini; in Dari, Nuba, and Arabic). ♦ June 20 at 6:30 and June 22 at 8:45: "My Neighbor, My Killer" (2009, Anne Aghion; in French and Kinyarwanda). ♦ June 20 at 9 and June 21 at 4:30: "Afghan Star" (2008, Havana Marking; in English, Dari, and Pashto). ♦ June 21 at 2, June 22 at 6:30, and June 23 at 4: "Look Into My Eyes" (2008, Naftaly Gliksberg; in English, French, German, Hebrew, and Polish). ♦ June 21 at 7, June 22 at 4, and June 23 at 9: "Mrs. Goundo's Daughter" (2009, Barbara Attie and Janet Goldwater; in English, Bambara, and French). ♦ June 23 at 6:30: "Tapologo" (2009, Gabriela Gutiérrez Dewar and Sally Gutiérrez Dewar; in English and Tswana).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Michel Piccoli. June 23 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "I'm Going Home" (2001, Manoel de Oliveira; in French).

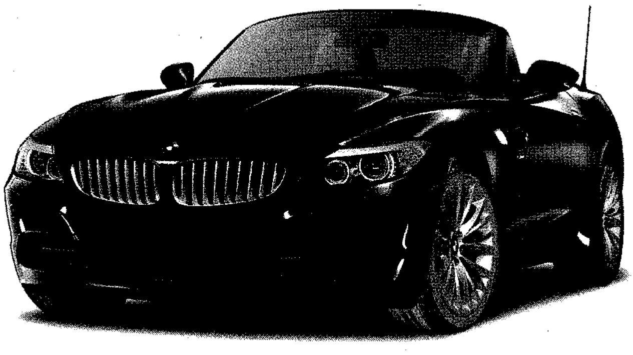
IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." June 19-20: "Killer's Kiss" (1955, Stanley Kubrick).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"The Old West: Myth, Character, and Reinvention." June 17-19 at 1:30: "Hedy" (1966, Andy Warhol). ♦ "The New India." June 17 at 4: "Children of the Pyre" (2008, Rajesh S. Jala; in Hindi). ♦ June 17 at 6:30: "Jodhaa Akbar" (2007, Ashutosh Gowariker; in Hindi and Urdu). ♦ June 18 at 4: "Supermen of Malegaon" (2008, Faiza Ahmad Khan: in Urdu and Hindi). ♦ June 18 at 7: "Quick Gun Murugan" (2008, Shashank Ghosh; in Tamil). ♦ "The Sixties: Yanks in Britain." June 17 at 4:30 and June 20 at 2: "A Hard Day's Night" (†). ♦ June 17 at 8 and June 22 at 4:30: "Good Times, Wonderful Times" (1966, Lionel Rogosin). ♦ June 18 at 4:30 and June 20 at 8: "The Servant" (1964, Joseph Losey). ♦ June 18 at 8 and June 19 at 4:30: "Bunny Lake Is Missing" (†). ♦ June 19 at 8 and June 21 at 2:30: "A Man for All Seasons" (1966, Fred Zinnemann). ♦ June 20 at 5 and June 22 at 8: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ June 21 at 5:30: "Dr. Strangelove; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." (1964, Kubrick). ♦ June 21 at 8: "Zulu" (1964, Cy Endfield).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 19 at 9:30: "The Fearless Vampire Killers" (1967, Roman Polanski).

READINGS AND TALKS

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
The outdoor concert series devotes itself to the spoken word this week. First up, on June 17 at 7:30, the novelists Wally Lamb and Zoë Heller read from their work. They are followed, on June 18 at 7:30, by the poets Sharon Olds, Thomas Sayers Ellis, and Elizabeth Alexander. June 19 at 8: A night of standup with the comedians Gabriel Iglesias and Pablo Francisco. June



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20 at 3: The economic consultant and urban green pioneer Majora Carter hosts an afternoon of poetry, art, and music devoted to environmental issues. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

"VESSELS & PROFILES OF THE QUADRICENTENNIAL"
A ten-week lecture series about waterfront life in and around the harbor gets under way on June 18 at 7 as Charlie Ritchie, the executive director of the LILAC Preservation Project, discusses efforts to restore the lighthouse tender LILAC, New York City's only remaining steamship. (Waterfront Museum, Pier 44, Red Hook, Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.waterfrontmuseum.org.)

SOLAS
St. Mark's Bookshop runs a reading series at this watering hole, which is just around the corner from its East Village home. On June 18 at 7:30, it presents the poets Noelle Kocot, Joshua Beckman, and Jennifer Kronovet. (232 E. 9th St. No tickets necessary.)

MERCANTILE LIBRARY
The poet Laurie Sheck delivers a multimedia presentation of her new genre-bending novel, "A Monster's Notes." (17 E. 47th St. 212-755-6710. June 23 at 6:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

SUMMER SOLSTICE
This year, Paul Winter and his consort begin this annual performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine a little earlier than usual. It's a day earlier, in fact (a Sunday-morning performance might interfere with the cathedral's more traditional use). On June 20 they'll start playing at 4:30 A.M. and continue through the sunrise. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 866-811-4111.) The following day, the urban shaman Mama Donna marks the actual event (which takes place at 1:46 A.M.) with some drumming in the dark, starting at 1:30 A.M. (Pier 16, South Street Seaport). Later that day, she visits Socrates Sculpture Park, in Long Island City, for a more family-friendly celebration, starting at 8 P.M. (www.socratessculpturepark.org.)

"TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME: 1864"
The Mutual Base Ball Club of New York, an organization that traces its roots back to the nineteenth century's very first professional league and was depicted in the famous Currier & Ives print "The American National Game of Base Ball," faces the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York. Both teams are contemporary reincarnations of the legendary clubs, but the game will still be played by 1864 rules (no gloves or helmets). After the match, the team members will invite spectators and their children to join them in a game of rounders, the nineteenth-century children's activity and precursor to baseball. (Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd., Pelham, the Bronx. 718-855-1461. June 20 at noon.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Auctions of pop-culture memorabilia are always a curious mishmash of oddities and rock-and-roll ephemera, and **Christie's** June 23 sale is no exception. The top lots are a bass guitar once owned by a not yet famous Kurt Cobain and a still sealed Beatles album with the famously bizarre cover shot of the Fab Four dressed in butcher's smocks and holding pieces of raw meat and baby-doll parts; Bob Dylan fanatics will be drawn to a poem handwritten by the young Bobby Zimmerman while at summer camp. More intriguing, perhaps, is an original set of steel-and-leather appendages made for Johnny Depp during the filming of the Tim Burton cult classic "Edward Scissorhands," as well as an eerie foam-latex bust of Depp in the same role, shaggy-haired and glassy-eyed, looking ever so sad. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Thinking of his legacy, W. Graham Arader, one of the preëminent dealers of maps, prints, and natural-history watercolors in the United States, has decided to part with a significant portion of his holdings through **Sotheby's** (on June 19), including an edition of the first modern atlas, created in 1513 by the German cosmographer Martin Waldseemüller (with twenty-seven Ptolemaic maps) and an eight-volume compendium of illustrations of lilies by Pierre-Joseph Redouté, botanist and official court artist of Marie-Antoinette and a favorite of Empress Josephine. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Words on paper seem to be going the way of the once popular method of cuneiform on brick, favored by the Assyrians of the thirteenth century B.C. **Bloomsbury** will auction off one of these bricks, describing the reinforcement of a canal in Mesopotamia, at its June 23 sale of books, manuscripts, and Americana; also among the highlights are a 1590 edition of Tasso's "Gerusalemme Liberata" and a first edition of Keats's third and last collection of poems, which includes "Ode to a Nightingale." Bloomsbury's earlier sale, however, marks some new territory—the potentially lucrative world of wine auctions, in a new partnership with the wine merchant Sokolin (June 19). (6 W. 48th St. 212-719-1000.)

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JASHAR AWAN

"Les Éphémères," at Lincoln Center Festival.

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
AGIT-ROCK
June 26-July 1

In 1979, John Cleese organized the first of the Secret Policeman's Balls, in which music and comedy were marshalled to raise money for Amnesty International. The Film Society of Lincoln Center presents the classic concert films. (212-875-5610.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LIGHT TOUCH
June 30-July 10

Sometime in the nineteen-eighties, the so-called light classics—Liszt tone poems, Rossini overtures, and the like—disappeared from "serious" orchestral concerts. "Summertime Classics," Bramwell Tovey's annual series with the New York Philharmonic, brings them back, with soloists such as the pianist Simone Dinnerstein. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

THE THEATRE
GLOBAL VOICES
July 7-26

The Lincoln Center Festival presents a dazzling lineup of international imports. Le Théâtre du Soleil performs "Les Éphémères," which explores the philosophical ramifications of an imminent apocalypse. Budapest's Katona József Theatre sets Chekhov's "Ivanov" in Hungary in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. (www.lincolncenter.org.)

ART
AUTO INDUSTRY
July 9-Aug. 16

After the Second World War, Japan excelled at the manufacture of American cars—in miniature. "Buriki: Japanese Tin Toys from the Golden Age of the American Automobile," at the Japan Society, will showcase seventy examples. (212-832-5511.)

NIGHT LIFE
UPTOWN STOMP
July 16-17 and July 19

"Ponderosa Stomp," the New Orleans music festival, takes over Lincoln Center with a series of shows highlighting William Bell and Harvey Scales (on the first night) and vintage rockabilly (on the second). The third show, at Alice Tully Hall, honors the composer and arranger Wardell Quezergue. (www.lincolncenter.org.)

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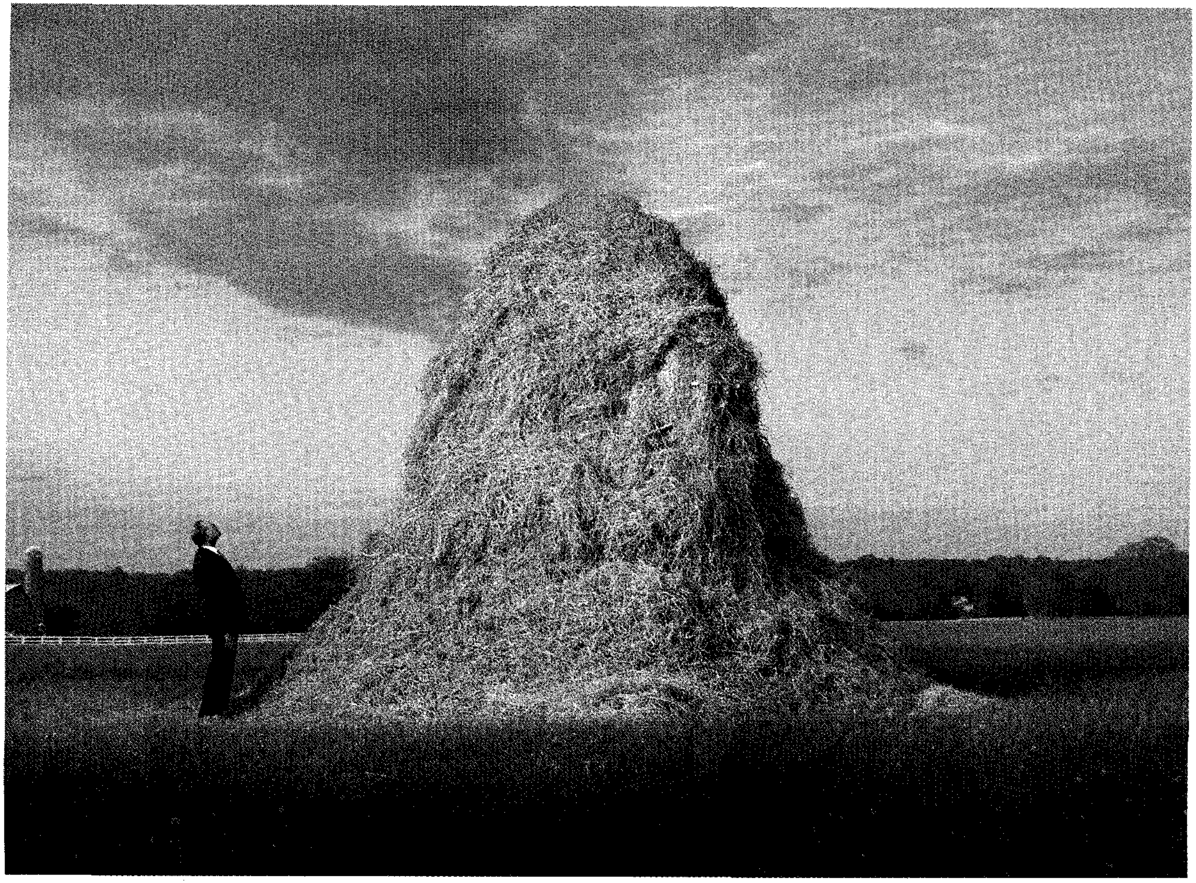

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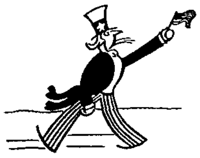
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE OBAMA EFFECT

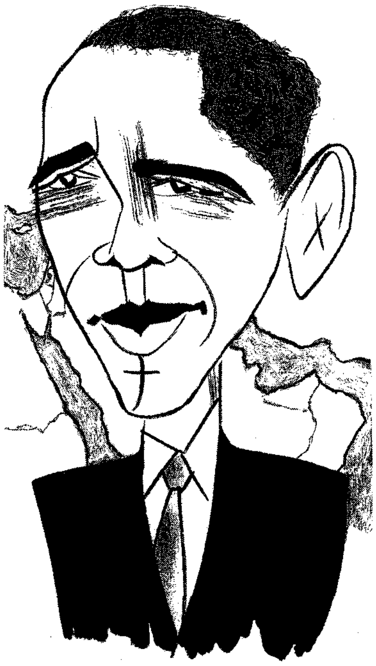


Three days after President Obama's address to the Arab and Muslim world, voters in Lebanon went to the polls to elect a new parliament. According to the *Times*, "most analysts" had confidently predicted victory for the electoral coalition led by Hezbollah—the Party of God, which is aligned with Syria and Iran, and has been responsible for most of the violence on Israel's northern border. Most analysts, it turns out, were wrong. The moderate coalition, routinely described as pro-American and pro-Western, took seventy-one seats to just fifty-seven for Hezbollah and its allies.

The politics of Lebanon, a scalding soup of ethnic groupings, some of them armed and dangerous, make Chicago's look like Montpelier's. The words of an American President, even one from Chicago, were not necessarily foremost in the minds of the Shiites, Sunnis, Druze, and Christians of many theological varieties and political persuasions who lined up to cast their ballots and dip their thumbs in ink. But most analysts (they're indefatigable) agreed that Obama's speech, and the carefully constructed edifice of public diplomacy of which it was the keystone, was a factor in the outcome.

Meanwhile, as this was being written, a joyfully energized electorate was awaiting the results of a vigorously contested election for President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. No matter who wins—the jingoist-populist-obscurantist incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or his comparatively moderate main opponent, Mir-Hossein Mousavi—ultimate power will continue to rest with the "supreme leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and his council of unaccountable theocrats, who kept liberal challengers off the ballot. But Iran is not a completely closed society. Change is in the Tehran air, and the American President's openness is part of it.

In Cairo, Obama spoke for a little more than fifty minutes, the length of a university lecture or a psychoanalytic session. His speech had elements of both, and he offered his audience not only ordered information, argument, and context but also the catharsis of saying aloud things long unsaid. He wished, he said, to speak clearly and plainly, and that is what he did. When he lamented that the fear and the anger provoked by the "enormous trauma" of 9/11 had "led us to act contrary to our traditions and our ideals," he called our most shameful act by its name, torture. When he reviewed the dismal history of our relations with Iran, he said, "In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government"—an apparently unprecedented Presidential acknowledgment. He called Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza an occupation, and he called the situation intolerable. He called Palestine Palestine. These are things that Muslim audiences are unused to hearing from an American President. By the same token, he called anti-Semitism vile; he called denial of the Holocaust ignorant and hateful; from the heart of the Arab world, he called for democracy and women's rights; from an Egyptian lectern, he called for tolerance of Coptic Christians. These are things that, too often, Muslim audiences are unused to hearing at all.



The Cairo address had the qualities we have come to expect from Obama's best speeches: empathy, frankness, respect for his listeners' intelligence. This time, he had an inherited advantage. Many of the words and phrases he used would have sounded strained and pandering coming from any other Western leader, ever. But

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Barack Hussein Obama's personal history drained the condescension from his recitation of the contributions of Islam to world civilization and of Muslims to American life. He sprinkled markers of respect: Islam was "revealed"; a mention of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad was followed, as in Islamic custom, by "peace be upon them"; the Koran was "the Holy Koran," as holy as the Holy Bible.

There were moments of excess and errors of omission. A boast that "the United States government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the hijab, and to punish those who would deny it" was a clause too far: the secular French Republic has its sacred traditions, too, and one of them forbids the display of religious accessories in state schools. A mention of the eight hundred thousand Jewish refugees from Arab lands might have been in order. And the Jews' tie to the land, if not to the state, of Israel goes back further than the Holocaust.

But Obama was seeking to create a new mood, which is a prerequisite to progress. He did not speak of "terrorism" or "the peace process." Instead, he said this to one side:

> Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and it does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. . . . It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children or to blow up old women on a bus.

And this to the other:

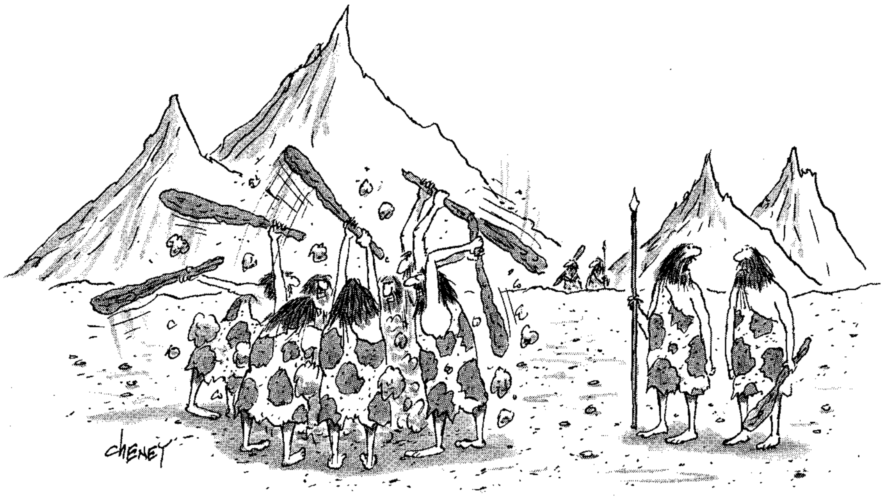
> The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

For admonishing Palestinians with the experience of African-Americans, Obama got no thanks from American neoconservatives, who deployed a favorite trope, "moral equivalence," to attack the comparison. But, if it is an exaggeration to equate Palestinian suffering with the sufferings of American blacks under the two and a half centuries of chattel slavery (which was not abolished without violence), comparing it with the century of segregation and disenfranchisement that followed is both useful and fair.

It has long been the official American view that Israel's settlements on the West Bank should, at a minimum, stop expanding. Under George W. Bush, "settlement activity" was criticized, if that's the word, as "not helpful," a formula perfectly consistent with "not harmful." But Obama appears to be serious. Settlement growth—which has been the dynamic status quo under Israeli governments of all stripes, and which the present right-wing ruling coalition appears wedded to—is indeed harmful. It is harmful to any prospect of peace, harmful to the economies of both sides, harmful to Israel's Jewish and democratic character, and helpful only to the fanatics on both sides who hold the majority hostage.

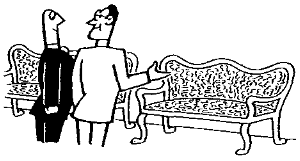
"It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true," Obama said in Cairo. And what everyone knows to be true, admittedly or not, is that the only solution offering a modicum of peace and justice for the peoples of Israel and Palestine is a state for each; that neither is capable of finding its way to that solution on its own; and that only American firmness and perseverance can save them both. The path ahead is littered with hazards, not least a fratricidal Palestinian leadership, divided between weakness and intransigence, and an Israeli government practiced in the ways of Washington and dominated by politicians hostile to the very idea of Palestinian statehood. The President's words in Cairo were inspiring and indispensable. Whether, years from now, they will be remembered with pride or with pity, with admiration or with mockery, is something that no one, not even most analysts, can say.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*



"It's some new thing called an intervention."

REAL LIFE DEPT.
HOME VISIT



"Palatial gay fantasia" is how Simon Doonan described his apartment in Greenwich Village the other night, as he swept past two garden gnomes crouching under a bright-orange lacquered console in the foyer. "Glamorous romper room," he continued, heading toward a paisley-patterned Ping-Pong table in the living room. "Because Johnny and I are very infantile." Nesting on bookshelves and tabletops were scores of ceramic animals designed by Doonan's spouse, the homeware baron Jonathan Adler. ("I'm just a simple potter!" Adler insisted.) A burlap bust of Napoleon was tucked into the fireplace, and about a fifth of the room was taken up by a huge black statue of a foot. "This is the antithesis of the two-room flat where I grew up," Doonan said.

Doonan's picaresque journey from ration books in Reading, England, to palatial gay fantasia is the subject of the British television show "Beautiful People," which was about to make its American début, on the Logo network. The show is adapted from Doonan's memoir "Nasty: My Family and Other Glamorous Varmints." "When the book was optioned, everyone thought I'd start flying to work in a mink-lined helicopter," Doonan said. In reality, his compensation was a bit more modest; he wouldn't say how much he was paid, but allowed that it was "better than a poke in the eye with a dirty stick."

Fortunately for Doonan, he has never depended on the material rewards of writing. Since 1985, he has had a day job as the creative director of Barneys, an arrangement that he defends passionately. "If Virginia Woolf had had two days a week at the ham counter at Harrods, she mightn't have offed herself," he said. Doonan offered his visitor a drink from a recessed bar in the wall, lined with glasses bearing skull-and-crossbones decals and labelled "Arsenic," "Strychnine," "Cyanide," and "Wood Alcohol." "We don't drink at all," Doonan said, "but we have this faux masculine—"

"It's mantique-y," Adler said, indicating the bar and a large leather hippopotamus nearby. "You are the ultimate mantique," Adler told Doonan, who, at fifty-six, is fourteen years his senior.

"*Cinquante-six*," Doonan said. "Ever since I passed fifty, I'm aging in French. It's more glamorous."

Doonan's alleged ancientness is a running joke in the household, as is his fictitious weight problem. Adler frequently refers to Doonan as an "obese elf," even though Doonan weighs in at a hundred and thirty-five pounds of lean white elf meat. Doonan and Adler, who were married in San Francisco in September, 2008, and have been together for fourteen years, adhere to a monklike regimen of exercise, teetotalling, and tea-drinking.

"My associations with alcohol are completely negative," Doonan said. "My dad made wine out of rose petals and potato peelings. My grandfather, his whole life was betting on the horses, and he strongly advised my mom to put gin in my milk so I would stay small and could be a jockey. But, thanks to my mom's two-pack-a-day habit, I stayed small anyway."

The couple settled into a tangerine-colored couch in the den and flipped on the television. In the première episode of "Beautiful People," the character based on Doonan's father does indeed make wine, out of "parsnips and marmalade." "I don't know why you'd bugger about with grapes when you can make a perfectly good wine out of potato peelings," the father says.

"That's directly from my book," Doonan declared, pleased.

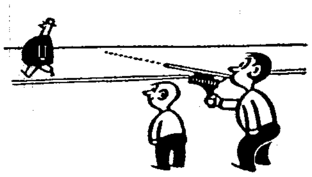
Asked if his real father, Terry, who died three years ago, would have liked the show, Doonan replied, "He'd probably be appalled. He and my mom got through their very difficult lives by not examining them. They created a milieu that was so chaotic my gayness was small potatoes."

Instead of being set in postwar England, as Doonan's childhood was, "Beautiful People" takes place in the late nineties. The boys on the show want to grow up to be West End stage stars, but Doonan's own aspirations were different. "Fashion," he said. "I was mesmerized by what was shimmering on the horizon." In the first episode, the young Doonan steals a hot-pink leopard-spotted dress from his best friend's Jamaican mother.

"It makes me appreciate gays," Doonan said, as the credits rolled. "Gay people are brave and resilient!" (Several hours earlier, it had been announced that Proposition 8 was upheld in California, outlawing gay marriage.) He went on, "It's about two little kids who get punched about and called batty boy"—Jamaican slang for "effeminate." "I've been doing that for fifty-six years. *Cinquante-six!* The other day, I got in a cab and the driver said, 'Are you a lady man?' I said, 'Oh, just take me to fucking Forty-seventh Street.'"

—*Ariel Levy*

HIGH-JINKS SHOOT-OUT



Killer, the last-man-standing game of water-pistol ambush, has become a key end-of-the-year ritual in several New York City high schools. At St. Ann's, a private school in Brooklyn Heights, the game lasts two and a half weeks and is especially ferocious. Over the years, students there have developed a seventeen-point rule book, a map of the safe zones around the school, an entry fee (currently twenty dollars per team; it goes into the winners' pot), and a nonplaying senior-class "judge," to arbitrate disputed kills and rule violations. The judge also makes a pie chart of death—the order of killing assignments, which he or she then distributes to squads shortly before opening day.

"I'm looking for some good massacres early," this year's judge said as the competition began, the second week in May. (Summoning what his classmates referred to as his "inner lawyer," he asked that his name not be used.) "I've arranged at least one boyfriend-girlfriend kill that could be interesting."

Initially, each team of up to four students is given only the identities of its immediate prey. All other players are anonymous, so that in the days leading up to the game the school becomes a souk of intelligence-gathering and disinformation. In 2007, Jake Protell, a freshman, distinguished himself by ferreting out the itinerary of a field trip that two targets were taking to Tel Aviv. Protell took a car to Newark Airport, found the victims before they passed through security, and dispatched them using two bathtub "squirt fish."

"I had to get special permission from the judge for the squirt fish, because I didn't want to take my gun anywhere near an El Al counter," Protell, now a junior, recalled, as he paced Pierrepont Street, three water guns shoved inside the pocket of a hoodie.

Eighteen squads of assassins signed up for Killer 2009, a total of seventy players, creating a pot of three hundred and sixty dollars. The first week kicked off with the upperclassmen's swift massacre of the less disciplined freshman teams. There were a couple of tenacious ninth-grade holdouts, though. Willis Cohen, age fifteen, just five feet six and a hundred and thirty pounds, was gumming up the works for a team of seniors assigned to kill him. Since the start of the game, the twelfth graders had been sleeping on futons in a couple of vans borrowed from their parents, the better to pull off a stoop-side ambush and avoid being ambushed themselves. They had to take Cohen out before they could move on to their next victims.

At 10:30 P.M. on a Wednesday, three of the four seniors, armed with Walgreens-issue water pistols, staked out Cohen's house in a blue Toyota minivan. The idea was to use a cell phone to call the Cohens' landline, posing as Cohen's teammate Dominic, using Dominic's caller I.D. The call had been engineered from a remote computer by a squad member with prodigious hacking skills.

"We want to get Cohen out on the stoop, or learn whether he's sleeping at home," Tuck Gaisford, the seniors' driver, said.

The call went through. But Cohen's

mom—who had earlier driven her son and a teammate to a kill in SoHo—had been tipped off. The brownstone remained dark, and the seniors spent the night on a cul-de-sac in the Heights.

Meanwhile, Jake Protell and his squad—Paulie Lowther, Charlotte Istel, and Mark Croitoroo—mowed through entire teams, racking up thirteen kills in four days. In five hours on Memorial Day, Lowther, a member of the winning teams from 2007 and 2008, shot a boy sitting on his stoop in Boerum Hill, a second as he ventured from his country house to Cobble Hill, and a third whom he duped into coming to a party in the Village.

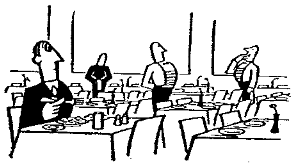
Willis Cohen was finally killed through no fault of his own. He woke up one day and, as usual, hopped a neighbor's fence and exited through another house. He caught a livery cab on Amity Street and headed north to the Heights. He knew he was in trouble when his driver refused to raise the windows. A member of the Gaisford team shot him in the chest through the cab's passenger-side window as he pulled up to the school.

"I told the driver to pull over on the other side of the street, but he wouldn't do it," Cohen said, the wet splotch drying in the center of his T-shirt. In the end, the Protell-Lowther team won, with twenty-one kills. They celebrated with a spaghetti dinner.

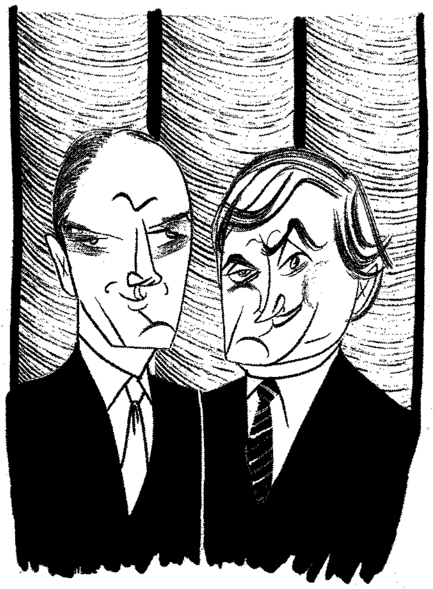
In the late innings of Killer season, some kids occasionally sleep in the deeper recesses of St. Ann's itself. The game's valedictory message is built into its architecture: school is the safe ground. And, keen as the graduating seniors may be to leave, the game tells them that the world outside is not.

—*Guy Martin*

FACE-LIFT DEPT.
CHAIN GANG



Imagine that you are planning a big birthday party and have to get the house in shape. One of the most annoying tasks has to be taking down the curtains and having them cleaned and rehung. Imagine, then, how much more daunting it would be if the curtains consisted of 81,408 metal chains strung across sixty windows that range from eighteen feet to twenty-two feet high. That was exactly the task that had to be completed as the Four Seasons Restaurant, in the Seagram Building, was being dolled up for its fiftieth-birthday celebration this month. Almost every Sunday since January, the restaurant's chief maintenance man, Eduardo Hernandez, has been at work by 8 A.M., along with his assistants, Miguel Marte and Eduardo Battis.



Alex von Bidder and Julian Niccolini

"We have to do this on Sundays, when the restaurant is closed," Hernandez said recently, standing on the platform of a hydraulic lift, twenty feet off the ground. He leaned over to remove a top tier of chains. "And, knock wood, I have never fallen so far.

"On Monday mornings at around six, the empty windows are cleaned by the building staff, and then we rehang the chains, so they're up when customers start to come in for lunch," Hernandez, who has been taking care of the premises for eleven years, said.

The idea of using chains as curtains came from Marie Nichols, a textile designer recommended by Philip Johnson, who worked with Mies van der Rohe on the building. The chains, Nichols thought, would suit the awesome scale of the windows and the French walnut-panelled modern rooms. They looked light and sheer with daytime backlighting, but snugly opaque at night. Most important, because they were metal they complied with the New York City fire code that prohibits the use of flammable materials in public places. When the chains were first hung, Johnson was surprised to find that they rippled, and everyone worried that the constant rhythmic undulations would make diners dizzy (they didn't).

Alex von Bidder and Julian Niccolini have held the management lease on the restaurant since 1995. "They thought of everything except that the chains might need cleaning," von Bidder said the other day. "We first discovered that back in 1979, when I was working for Tom Margittai and Paul Kovi, the previous operators, and we noticed that many of the chains were broken. We called the firm in Rhode Island that originally supplied the chains and, fortunately, they still had replacements. But when they arrived we were horrified to see that they didn't match the old chains."

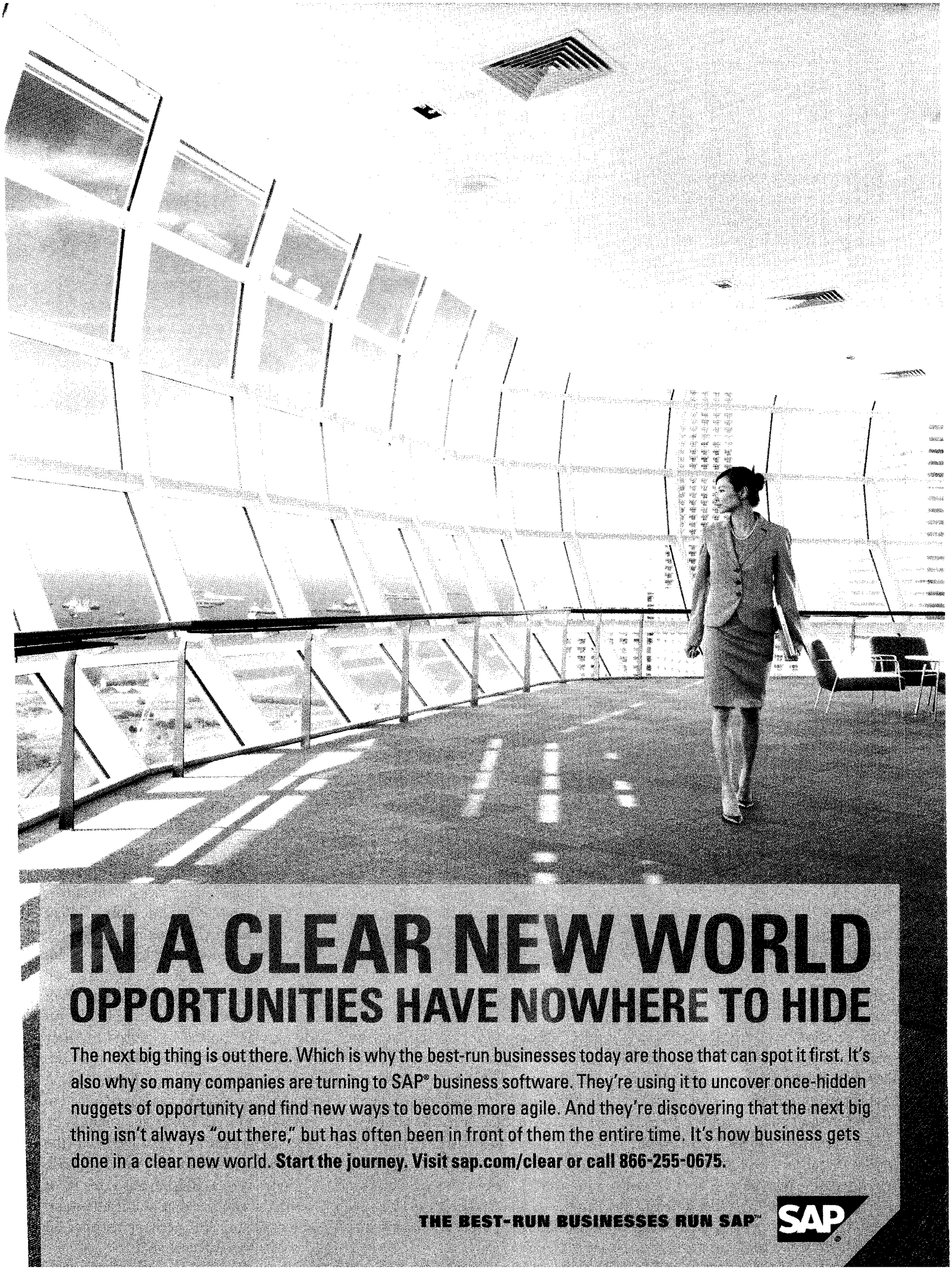
Margittai, now retired and living in Santa Fe, recalled the solution: "We noticed that the old chains seemed to be coated with dust and smoke and grease after hanging there for twenty years. Alex got this wild idea that the dishwasher might work and so he took off an old drab chain, tied it to the handle of a coffee cup, and ran it through the dishwasher. It worked."

Von Bidder devised a cleaning protocol. The chains are mounted on frames, five panels to each window. Workers remove them in sections and take them to the dishwashing room. One panel at a time is soaked in a washtub of hot water and a Windex-like glass cleaner. After twenty minutes, each panel is laid on the dishwasher's conveyor belt and run through a scalding steam bath. Broken chains are reattached or replaced and the wet panels are carried to the Grill Room, where they are draped over drop cloths that cover the rail of the stairway leading up from the street. It takes between five and seven hours for them to dry.

With the chains clean and in place, all that von Bidder and Niccolini had to worry about was polishing the four thousand bronze rods and the eight thousand bronze cross wires that secure them over the Grill Room's bar and balcony.

"We have two big daily battles at this restaurant," von Bidder said. "One is maintaining the premises. The other is getting customers."

—*Mimi Sheraton*



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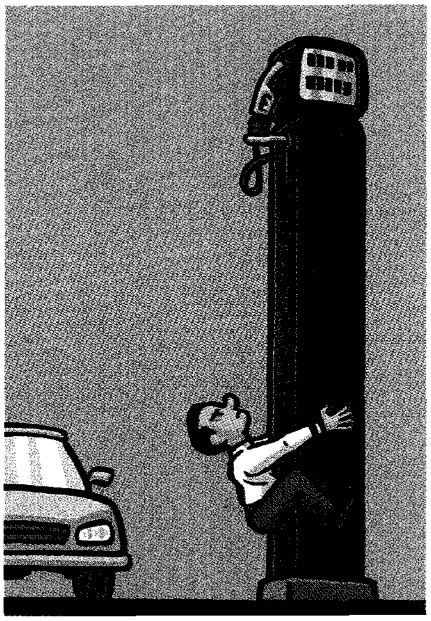
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
OIL CHECK

How fast the world turns. Only a few months ago, as consumer spending evaporated and commodity prices collapsed, investors and policymakers were haunted by the spectre of deflation. Today, with the economy showing some signs of bottoming and commodity prices back on the rise, the worry du jour has suddenly become inflation. Much of this anxiety is just a matter of looking for a lead lining in every cloud; long-term interest rates, after all, remain historically low, and there's little evidence of inflationary pressures in the economy as a whole. But there is one bit of inflation that can't be written off so confidently: oil prices, after falling more than a hundred dollars a barrel last year, have roughly doubled this year, sending gasoline prices up more than sixty per cent and leaving Americans paying about a dollar more per gallon than they were in December. Many worry that higher prices at the pump could end up choking off the economy's putative green shoots before they've even had a chance to grow.

This isn't an idle concern, since recent history demonstrates how damaging skyrocketing oil prices can be. Indeed, blame for the current recession can be laid in part on the spike in the price of oil between June of 2007 and July of 2008, when it peaked at nearly a hundred and fifty dollars a barrel. A study by James Hamilton, a macroeconomist at U.C.-San Diego, reached a startling conclusion: given the already weak state of the U.S. economy in 2007, the sharp increase in oil prices might have been enough, on its own, to tip the economy into recession, even without that year's blowup in the credit markets. It wasn't just that, as many people assume, higher gas prices functioned as a tax increase, taking money out of people's pockets. More important was the fact that four-dollar-a-gallon gasoline dramatically changed the way people spent their money. In particular, it killed demand for S.U.V.s and big cars; S.U.V. sales were down more than twenty-five per cent by the middle of last year. And, since these were the vehicles that American automakers relied on for most of their business, job cuts soon followed (a hundred and twenty-five thousand auto manufacturing jobs were lost between 2007 and 2008), with ripple effects for the entire economy. The price spike had other consequences, too; some have suggested that it magnified the housing bust by making long commutes to the overpriced exurbs less attractive. And this all created a classic "oil shock," like the one that hit the economy in the early nineteen-seventies.

Given that dismal experience, do today's rising oil prices mean that we're doomed? Not necessarily. To begin with, not all jumps in the price of oil turn into shocks. Between 2001 and 2006, for instance, the price of oil tripled, and yet the economy seemed to suffer few ill effects: inflation was stable, unemployment low, and economic growth reasonably strong. And, even after the recent run-up, oil prices are simply back where they were for much of 2006. What's more, higher gas prices probably can't do the same kind of damage they did last year because of the havoc they have already caused: G.M., Ford, and Chrysler have been dramatically downsized since then, and auto sales in general have fallen so far that the decline probably can't get much worse. All in all, a reprise of last year's oil crisis seems unlikely.



That doesn't mean, though, that there's nothing to worry about. Expensive gas often has a psychological impact as well as a material one. Although there is no one-to-one correlation between gas prices and consumer confidence, a 2007 study by the economists Paul Edelstein and Lutz Kilian showed that, historically, sharp spikes in oil prices have sent consumer confidence plummeting, and have led to outsized cutbacks in general consumer spending. This makes sense: gasoline prices are the most publicly visible prices in the economy as a whole—no other prices are displayed on the street in bold, two-foot-tall numbers—so it's not surprising that they have a disproportionate impact on the way people feel. What's tricky is that economists don't have a clear sense of what distinguishes a "sharp spike" from a normal rise in prices: up to a certain point, higher prices seem to make only a minor difference, but, once that point is reached, they begin to do real damage. (In other words, $2.75 a gallon may be sustainable, but $3.50 a gallon may not.) In large part, it may be a matter of expectations: if consumers see the current increase in prices as a return to normal levels, it will hurt much less than if they see it as a radical shift or a harbinger of future increases.

Even if we weather this increase, though, the problem won't go away: unlike past oil spikes, which were the result of supply disruptions, today's oil prices are driven mainly by the rise in demand from places like China and India, so, unless the economy falls back into the abyss, they're unlikely to decrease sharply. What we're hoping for is a Goldilocks solution, where the economy starts to boom again but the price of oil doesn't. Perhaps we'll get it. But, rather than leave so much of our fate to chance, we'd be better off doing what politicians always say they want to do: lessen the U.S. economy's dependence on oil. One step toward that would be to phase in a gas tax designed to smooth out oil's spikes and plunges by keeping the price of gasoline fixed (the tax would rise when the price of gas fell, and vice versa). Raising gas taxes is, of course, a solution that politicians—and voters—hate. But perhaps another oil shock or two will change that.

—*James Surowiecki*

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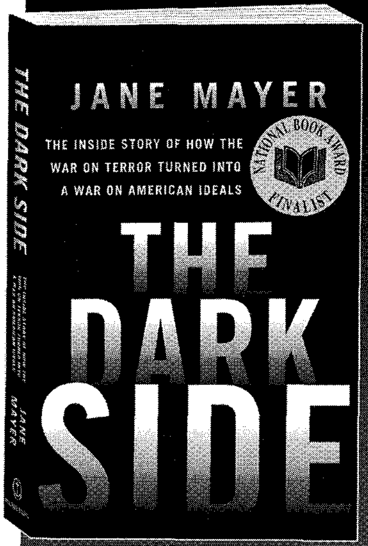
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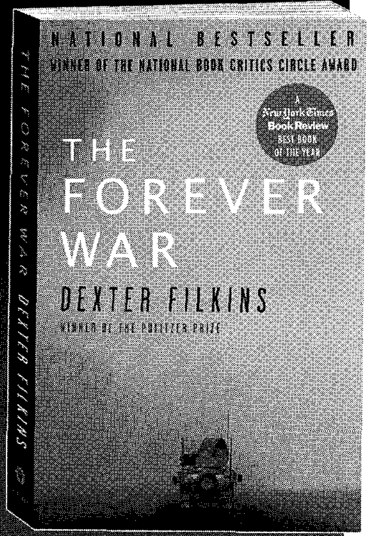
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ANNALS OF CRIME

DON'T SHOOT

A radical approach to the problem of gang violence.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

In April, 2006, two brutal street killings in the Over-the-Rhine section of Cincinnati spread fear through the city. A white suburban mother of three, who was trying to buy drugs at the corner of Fourteenth and Race, got into an argument with the dealer, and was shot and killed. A few days later, on the same block, four white kids, also from the suburbs—a boy at the wheel, three girls in the back—were buying drugs when a black man walked up to the car and shot the boy in the head.

These incidents, coming within days of each other, contributed to the public's impression that violent crime in the streets was out of control. In fact, much of the violence was occurring between people who were closely connected. Young black men were shooting each other over drug deals gone bad; in the majority of cases, the victims and the shooters knew each other. Nevertheless, although the average Cincinnatian had little chance of getting shot on the street, citizens perceived potential killers everywhere. And that presented Chief Thomas Streicher and his assistant chief, Lieutenant Colonel James Whalen, of the Cincinnati Police Department, with two problems: a crime spree and a public-relations crisis.

The killings were perpetrated mostly by gangs, or "groups"—the expression preferred by Cincinnati civic leaders. "Not real organized gangs such as your Crips and Bloods and whatnot," Whalen told me. "More like loose-knit groups of guys hanging out on street corners." In the summer of 2006, Streicher and Whalen implemented a "zero tolerance" plan. They assembled an élite sixty-man crime-fighting squad code-named Vortex, which began making sweeps of high-crime areas, or "hot spots," arresting people not just for serious crimes but also for misdemeanors, like jaywalking and loitering. By the end of September, more than twenty-six hundred arrests had been made.

The drawback of zero tolerance is that it tends to make law-abiding citizens in hot spots almost as fearful of the police as they are of the criminals. As Whalen, a big, bearlike man with a friendly Irish face, put it to me recently, "You say, 'O.K., we're going to arrest everyone who jaywalks.' So who do you arrest? Someone's grandmother, or the milkman, or some guy who has just worked a sixteen-hour day and is trying to get home as fast as he can. It's bullshit. Even in high-crime neighborhoods, there are a lot of honest people living there. Meanwhile, the real bad guys—they know a sweep is on, so they just stay inside until things cool off."

The Cincinnati Police Department's relationship with the black community had been a poisonous issue for years. In March, 2001, the A.C.L.U. and a local civil-rights group filed a lawsuit against the city for racial profiling and excessive force. Three weeks later, after a police officer chased and fatally shot an unarmed nineteen-year-old black man, the city was engulfed in three days of riots, arson, and looting. Whalen was the commanding officer of the riot-response team, and he saw firsthand the utter breakdown of trust between the cops and the community. In 2002, as part of an agreement reached to settle the A.C.L.U. lawsuit and in response to a Department of Justice investigation, a federal monitor was appointed to oversee reforms in the police department. Some progress had been made since the riots, but Operation Vortex threatened to undo it.

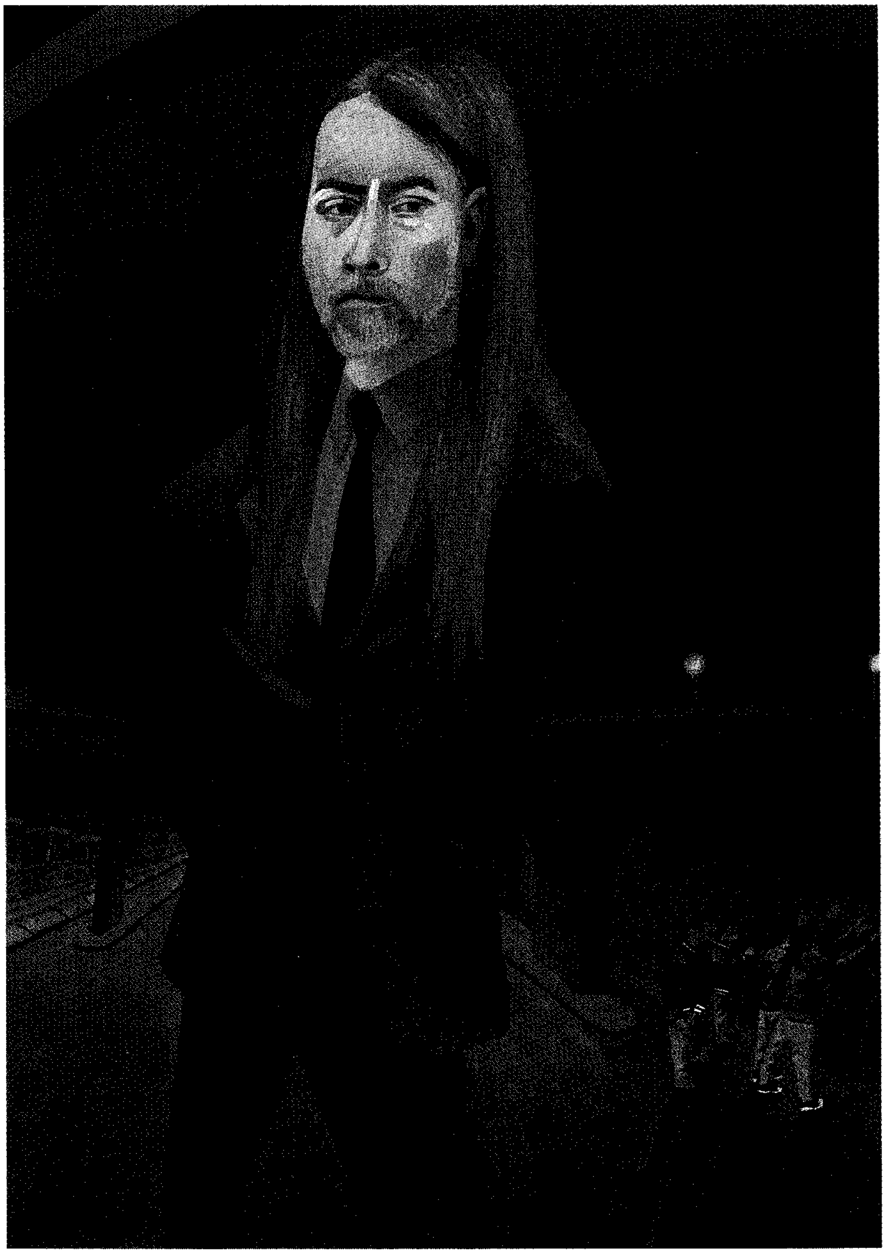
Vortex did reduce street crime, according to the police. But it had little effect on the city's murder count, which, with twelve murders in September of 2006 and a deadly spurt over the holidays, finished the year at eighty-nine, the highest number since recordkeeping began.

After the 2001 riots, the Cincinnati police heard from dozens of academics and criminologists, who proposed a variety of policy initiatives aimed at improving relations with the community.

Captain Daniel Gerard, who took over Vortex in the fall of 2007, didn't put much stock in their ideas. As he said, "Academia and law enforcement are at opposite ends of the spectrum. They like theories, we like results."

Therefore, when David Kennedy, a professor in the anthropology department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York City, came to Cincinnati in the fall of 2006 to pitch a program he had devised to counter gang violence, the cops didn't expect much. Kennedy was tall and slim, and in the dark clothes he favored there was something about him of the High Plains Drifter—the mysterious stranger who blows into town one day and makes the bad guys go away. He wore a grizzled beard and had thick, unbound hair that cascaded halfway down his back. "What's some guy who looks like Jesus got to tell us about crime in Cincinnati?" was the line around police headquarters.

Kennedy had been approached by Dr. Victor Garcia, the head of the trauma unit at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, who was seeing almost daily the effects of the city's violent gangs: the stabbings, shootings, and beatings, and the injuries to innocent children caught in the crossfire. "Children with their eyes shot out, children paralyzed," Garcia told me. "I started to wonder, instead of treating injuries, how can we prevent them from happening in the first place?" Garcia and a local councilman named Cecil Thomas arranged a conference call between Kennedy and Mark Mallory, Cincinnati's recently elected mayor. Two months later, Kennedy outlined his plan to the city's officials and community leaders.



David Kennedy told Cincinnati that gang-related murders could be cut in half.

MARK ULRIKSEN

Ceasefire, as Kennedy's program is sometimes known, begins with the fact, commonly recognized by criminologists, that a small number of hardened criminals commit a hugely disproportionate number of serious violent crimes. Often, much of the violence is caused by gang dynamics: score settling, vendettas, and turf issues, all played out according to the law of the streets. Arresting the shooters doesn't generally stop the killing; nor does threatening them with long prison sentences. But one thing does work, Kennedy had discovered: telling them to stop.

In Cincinnati, Kennedy explained, the police would first identify gang members on parole or probation and compel them to attend a meeting. There the cops would deliver an ultimatum: the shootings must stop. "And if they do not stop," Kennedy said, "the consequences will be swift, and certain, and severe, and punishment will be handed out not just to the individual involved in the shooting but to everyone in that individual's gang."

The young men in the gangs would also be given a phone number that they could call for help. The city would make life coaching and job counselling available to those who wanted out of the thug life. "We don't promise them jobs—we promise to do the best we can for them," Kennedy said. Clergy, ex-gang members, and victims and their family members would be on hand to deliver the moral component of the message to the offenders: "What you are doing is wrong, and we know you can do better."

Like many politicians, Mallory was concerned about being branded soft on crime, especially at a time when citizens were calling for more police, longer prison terms for offenders, and the construction of a new jail. But the police seemed unable to reduce the homicide rate, and Ceasefire offered a fresh approach to the problem—Kennedy all but guaranteed the Cincinnati civic leaders that if they followed his plan the city would reduce its gang-related murder count by forty to fifty per cent in a year. At the end of the meeting, the Mayor, the city manager, and the city council gave their support to the plan, and about five hundred thousand dollars was budgeted over two years.

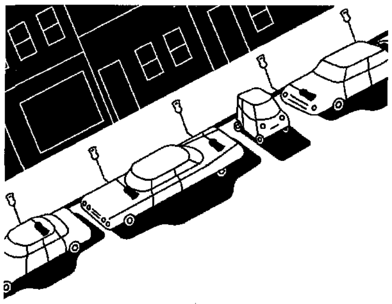
The police remained skeptical. To Chief Streicher, a blond and youthful fifty-five-year-old with a military bearing, whose demeanor and posture, and even the ring of his name (pronounced "striker"), signal a man of action, Ceasefire sounded like a social program promoted by do-gooders. And the cops did not like the idea of being on a team with social workers. Whalen explained to me the C.P.D.'s distinction between social workers and cops: "Social people hug thugs. We kick their butts."

Cincinnati has always had a strong conservative streak, and its police force is no exception. In responding to crime outbreaks, police tactics hadn't changed much since Whalen's father was a cop, battling Vietnam War protesters in the sixties. "Peace through superior firepower," Gerard told me. The C.P.D. relied heavily on its fleet of vehicles; "send another car" was standard operating procedure when dealing with disturbances. Whalen explained, "You've got a problem at Fourteenth and Vine, so you send a couple of cops out there to that corner." But even within hot spots crimes were viewed as isolated incidents. "We'd say, 'We've got a problem with Jerry, or Frank—we got to pick that individual up,'" Whalen said. Little effort was made to aggregate crime data, so that the information could be analyzed for patterns, which would situate Jerry's and Frank's offenses within a context and a network. The beat cops often understood the context, but their captains and commanders rarely asked for their advice. As a result, Streicher and Whalen and the rest of the C.P.D. leadership had no hard data about how many of the murders in the city were gang-related, what the real motives for the killings were, and how the shooters and the victims were connected.

In May of 2007, beat cops and investigators were summoned from Cincinnati's five districts to the new regional Homeland Security Center to meet Kennedy and participate in two eight-hour information-gathering sessions, overseen by Dr. Robin Engel, the director of the University of Cincinnati Policing Institute. Everyone gathered in the command room, where large maps of each of the districts were spread out on tables. The researchers began a "gang audit" with the first district. Cops were asked to draw on the map the location of any gangs they were aware of, which would be represented by numbered circles. The officers relied on anecdotal information that they had picked up on the streets. Engel and her students peppered them with questions. Where is the group located? How many members does it have? Is it allied with any other gangs? Does it have any conflicts or "beefs"—which tend to be ongoing vendettas sometimes triggered by a long-forgotten slight—with other gangs? What kinds of criminal activity is it involved in? How organized is it? How violent is it? Does the gang have any identifying "tags" (graffiti) or colors? Are there any standout individuals? A form containing some of these questions was projected on a giant video screen on one wall.

"You could see the cops were wary of us at first," Engel said. "They saw us as outsiders—which we were." But soon the cops from the other districts started marking up their maps and answering the questions on the form even before Engel and her students reached them. "That's when I knew we were going to win them over," Whalen said.

The researchers collated and analyzed all this information. They identified and mapped sixty-nine gangs, which the cops estimated to contain a thousand individuals altogether; over the coming months, the cops managed to name eight hundred of these. The researchers also prepared "sociograms"—visual representations of the dynamics among the different gangs—in which gangs allied with each other were connected with green lines, and gangs pursuing conflicts were connected with red lines. With the names of the gang members, the researchers were able to mine the cops' field-incident reports, surveillance records, and arrest sheets to flesh out patterns of criminal behavior. Among the facts they discovered about the gang members was that a third of them had ten or more felony charges, and ninety-one per cent had a prior arrest for a violent crime.



David Kennedy is not a cop, or an academically trained criminologist, and his lack of formal schooling in either the practice or the theory of crime control may be his strongest qualification for his job. In the bifurcated world of criminology, Kennedy is able to speak to both cops and academics. His 2008 book, "Deterrence and Crime Prevention," has been described by scholars as a landmark rethinking of public policy, but it can also be read as a primer on twenty-first-century policing. George Kelling, the co-author, with James Q. Wilson, of the influential 1982 essay "Broken Windows," told me, "Cops put on a tough front about crime, but they really do care, and David speaks with passion, and with the credibility that comes from spending hours in the back of squad cars, so cops respond."

Kennedy's father, Christopher, a mechanical engineer, was born in the Clinton Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, not far from where David lives now, in Fort Greene, but Kennedy was raised in a suburb of Detroit, where his father worked in the auto industry, designing suspension systems. The family valued "ruthless common sense," Kennedy told me. "Good thinking!" was the highest compliment David and his two sisters could receive from their parents. He attended Swarthmore College, where he studied moral philosophy.

The idea that the threat of punishment can act as an effective deterrent to crime goes back to the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Beccaria's 1764 essay, "On Crimes and Punishments," was among the first works in Western literature to argue for a humane and rational system of criminal justice and against torture and the death penalty. Beccaria thought that punishment should be proportional to the crime and preventive, not retributive. In order for the threat of punishment to be an effective deterrent, he wrote, the punishment itself had to be swift, severe, and certain; Beccaria added that certainty and swiftness were the most important of these qualities, and severity the least. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bentham elaborated on Beccaria's ideas, arguing that rational men, faced with the choice between pleasure and pain, freedom and incarceration, and benefits and sanctions, will make the choice that yields the greater happiness. This assumption is one of the foundations of the American criminal-justice system.

Immanuel Kant, on whom Kennedy wrote his senior thesis, also considered the role of deterrence in matters of crime and punishment. From his reading of Kant, Kennedy said, he internalized the idea that "morality predicated on external pressures alone is never sufficient." But Kennedy never anticipated that Kant's ideas would help shape the core of his life's work: designing a modern system of deterrence that includes a moral component.

After graduating, in 1980, Kennedy moved to Boston and became a freelance writer. He spent a year working on science and technology pieces before taking a salaried job as a case-study writer at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. One of his early assignments was to prepare case studies for the Harvard Executive Session on Community Policing, a series of meetings attended by police chiefs, criminologists, and criminal-justice experts, who were brought together by Mark Moore, the founder of the school's criminal-justice program. Many in the group agreed that the two traditional approaches to crime—the liberal remedy, which was to attack root causes like poverty, education, and social and economic injustice; and the conservative approach, which was to rely on the criminal-justice system—had proved insufficient, especially in dealing with inner-city drug and gang-related crimes. A third approach was needed, incorporating traditional elements and deploying police resources in new, creative ways.

Among the participants, who met periodically over five years, were Edwin Meese, then Reagan's Attorney General; Ben Ward, the commissioner of the N.Y.P.D.; Daryl Gates, the chief of the L.A.P.D.; George Kelling; and Herman Goldstein, a University of Wisconsin law professor. Goldstein argued that enforcement alone is inherently limited, and in confronting chronic street crime he stressed community involvement and a heavy reliance on the skills of beat cops and line officers. Goldstein named this approach "problem-oriented policing."

In the mid-eighties, Kennedy, while researching his case studies, accompanied two Los Angeles beat cops to a housing project in the Watts area called Nickerson Gardens. The crack epidemic was just beginning, and Nickerson Gardens had become one of the most dangerous places in the city. As Kennedy got out of the squad car and looked around, "I couldn't believe my eyes," he told me, dropping his voice and slowing down. "I stood there on the sidewalk and watched civilization coming apart. Drug dealers on the street, drug runners, old guys guarding the stashes. People with thirty-year-long heroin addictions wandering around, serious crack addicts, with that manic look. And I had this strongly visceral response: This is not O.K. This has got to stop. And it was immediately obvious that nothing the police were doing was going to work."

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In 1988, Moore and Malcolm Sparrow, a Kennedy School professor who was a former detective chief inspector with the British police, asked Kennedy to work with them on a book about new ideas in policing. “So that’s where I got my graduate-school education,” Kennedy said. “I read everything, and talked about this stuff constantly.” He had always intended to return to freelance writing, he said, “but I realized that I was too committed to the work I was doing.” He asked Moore if he could become part of the criminal-justice program at the Kennedy School, and Moore hired him, in 1992.

“It was just a magical time,” Kennedy said, of the early nineties. “There was a sense that something profound had been figured out, and it was going to change everything. We had been dead wrong about crime for so long, and we could see we were at a point of transforming these institutions.”

HUBRIS AT ZUNZAL

Nearly sunset, and time on the water
of 1984. Language its tracer.
No image like the image of language.

I had waded out about thigh deep.
Then a shout from the beach.
I held in my hand half a coconut shell

of coconut milk and 150-proof rum
and dumped it white into the waves
when it came on me how sweet it had been,

then the idea I was not finished,
then the act of reaching down
with the idea I would get it back.

—*Rodney Jones*

In fact, nothing changed. Kennedy’s timing was terrible. From 1987 to 1990, during the peak of the crack epidemic, youth homicides in cities across America rapidly escalated; in Boston during that period, youth homicides increased two hundred and thirty per cent, and from 1991 to 1995 the city averaged about forty-four youth homicides a year. Across the country, from the smallest county judgeship to the Presidency of the United States, political races hinged more and more on the question of who could be tougher on crime. From 1980 to 2000, the prison population in the U.S. increased from three hundred and nineteen thousand to 1.3 million. Federal corrections expenditures, driven by new federal drug-sentencing changes, went from five hundred and forty-one million dollars in 1982 to more than $6.9 billion in 2006, and state corrections expenditures that year totalled more than forty-two billion dollars. California now spends about two and a half times as much per prison inmate as it does per student in the University of California system.

By the mid-nineties, crime rates were dropping in cities around the country, nowhere more dramatically than in New York City, where Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton were pioneering the zero-tolerance approach and drawing attention to Kelling and Wilson’s “broken windows” theory by aggressively pursuing minor crimes. Advocates of longer sentencing and “three strikes” legislation cited those measures as the main reasons for the decline. Subsequent analysis by social scientists has suggested that the increase in incarceration was only a small factor in the great crime decline; other reasons, such as changing demographics and economic circumstances, and the waning of the crack epidemic, were collectively more important. Nonetheless, by the late nineties, incapacitation—locking a lot of people up for long terms to prevent crime—was the new ruling principle in criminal justice. Deterrence, in the classical sense of the word—using the threat of punishment to prevent crime—had become an even smaller part of public policy.

In 1994, the National Institute of Justice gave a grant to Kennedy and Anne Morrison Piehl, a colleague from the Kennedy School, to work out a problem-oriented approach to youth violence in Boston. They were joined by Anthony Braga, who was then a doctoral student in criminal justice at Rutgers University. Kennedy was eager to talk to cops who had the most street knowledge, and eventually he was directed to Paul Joyce, the leader of the police department’s Youth Violence Strike Force. Over the next six months, Joyce gradually revealed his methods for dealing with violent gangs. He had observed that the use of force and the threat of prison seemed to have little effect in deterring gang members’ behavior. But certain moral authorities from within the community—clergy, ex-cons, outreach workers with street credibility—could sometimes get through to the offenders, especially when their pleas were coupled with the promise of help. Joyce had also figured out how to use the gangs’ own internal dynamics against them. Joyce was cryptic about this part of his operation; when Kennedy asked how he had managed to calm down one gang in particular, Joyce would say only, “We just told them the truth.” The truth, it turned out, was that if one more gang shooting occurred, by any one of their members, the whole group was going to take the blame.

“I just said, ‘Holy shit!’ ” Kennedy told me. “ ‘This is incredible! Do you realize what this means?’ ” Joyce’s techniques, he believed, could be used to formulate a method of “focussed deterrence”—a systematic, repeatable version of the ad-hoc working methods that Joyce and his partners had developed in the streets.

Kennedy also discovered that Joyce’s strike force knew how the victims knew the shooters, and what the beefs between them were. “I said, ‘Oh my God, you know all this stuff!’ ‘Sure we know it,’ Joyce replied. ‘It’s just that nobody asked us for it before.’ ”

In order to broadcast the messages that Joyce imparted informally to gangs citywide, Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl came up with the idea of group forums, or call-ins. "We went to the Boston police command structure and presented it, thinking, This is never going to fly," Kennedy said. "But they heard us out, and then said, 'Yep, that'll work.' "

The first call-in was in the spring of 1996, a few months after Joyce had been succeeded by Gary French. By the second round, that summer, youth homicide had dropped dramatically. Just eight homicides were committed over the five months following the first call-in, compared with twenty-eight in the same five months of the previous year—a seventy-one-percent decline. In October, there were no youth homicides at all. Things got so quiet that French thought his pager had stopped working. "I almost took my beeper in to have it checked," he said at the time. "It just stopped going off."

The Ceasefire team in Cincinnati came together during the first half of 2007. It included members of the police department and the U.S. Attorney's office, the district attorney, and the county sheriff, as well as Hamilton County probation and Ohio state parole officers. It also encompassed an array of social-service providers and a dozen or so outreach workers, who served as liaisons with the gang members. The cops, social workers, and outreach workers, some of whom were ex-cons, would all have a stake. The group acquired a name—C.I.R.V. (Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence)—offices downtown, and a project manager, S. Gregory Baker, a civilian who handles community relations for the C.P.D. Several former executives from Procter & Gamble, which is based in Cincinnati, volunteered their "best practices" management expertise to the group. Eventually, the C.I.R.V. team numbered almost fifty partner agencies.

The first Cincinnati call-in was held on July 31, 2007, in a large courtroom in the Hamilton County Courthouse. The C.I.R.V. team assembled in the courtroom first. Then about thirty men, mostly young, were admitted. Heads bent, avoiding eye contact, and sullenly postured like the punctuation at the end of a question for which there is no answer—What the fuck?—they filed into the benches reserved for courtroom spectators. A few who were already in lockup wore handcuffs and leg shackles. They sat down, and the team in the front of the room looked at them. No one spoke.

Call-ins are intensely dramatic events, like modern-day morality plays. At the one I attended, there was a palpable, almost evangelical desire to make the experience transformative for the gangbangers. An older ex-gang member named Arthur Phelps, whom everyone called Pops, wheeled a thirty-seven-year-old woman in a wheelchair to the center of the room. Her name was Margaret Long, and she was paralyzed from the chest down. "Seventeen years ago, I shot this woman," Phelps said, weeping. "And I live with that every day of my life." Then Long cried out, "And I go to the bathroom in a bag," and she snatched out the colostomy bag from inside the pocket of her wheelchair and held it up while the young men

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stared in horror. When the final speaker, a street worker named Aaron Pullins III, yelled, "Your house is on fire! Your building is burning! You've got to save yourselves! Stand up!," three-quarters of the group jumped to their feet, as if they had been jerked up like puppets on strings.

At the initial call-in, Victor Garcia was the first to speak. He told the young men that he loved them, that they had value to their community, and that he knew they were better than their violent actions implied. Afterward, Chief Streicher addressed them, thanking them for coming, and making it clear that "this is nothing personal." He then delivered the message: "We know who you are, we know who your friends are, and we know what you're doing. If your boys don't stop shooting people right now, we're coming after everyone in your group." To reinforce this message at a later call-in, surveillance footage showing some of the invitees selling drugs was projected on a screen at the front of the courtroom. "Raise your hands when you see yourselves," Streicher said. One by one, hands went up.

The young men were introduced to the social workers, who were available to help them get jobs and educational assistance, if they called the phone number that had been provided to them in an information packet. And two mothers of sons murdered by gangs spoke of their pain and loss.

Michael Blass, a public official who was then with the Ohio Department of Public Safety, wrote an account of his experience as an observer at this first call-in. He described the invitees' "awkward attempts to project confidence, indifference, in some cases, perhaps, hostility. . . . These angry young men, used to being in control in the incredibly brutal environment of the mean streets, were noticeably off-balance and unsure of themselves." Blass wrote, "I saw a few young men choke back tears. . . . Over the course of a couple of hours, their facial expressions changed from those of cynicism or polite boredom to attention and curiosity." One young man raised his shackled hands above his head and cried out, "I never knew there was this much love out there . . . seriously, I never knew it."

One of the gang members invited to the meeting was Dante Ingram, twenty-nine, who had been selling drugs and stealing since he was fifteen. "That's how we was brought up," he told me recently. "When your mom's a crackhead, your dad's in the joint, your brother sells drugs, and your best buddy got a Cadillac and Jordans—what else you going to do? You got no other role models." In 2006, Ingram had been caught with a large amount of marijuana and several guns in his house, and sentenced to ten years in federal prison, but it was his first felony conviction and the judge released him on probation. His probation officer had ordered him to attend the call-in.

Ingram told me that he was more influenced by the community-services aspect of the Ceasefire strategy than by the threat of swift and certain punishment. "During the cops' presentation, I wasn't really listening," he said. "Some guys around me were snoring. They were being the typical tough cops, threatening us and whatnot. But you got to understand—threats mean nothing to these guys."

Ingram kept the card with the phone number. "For the next three weeks, I looked at it every day," he told me. Finally, he called, and left Stan Ross, the head of the street workers, a message: "If this shit is for real, give me a call." Ross called, and within a month Ingram had a job in sales with a telemarketing firm.

Kennedy had cautioned the C.I.R.V. team that the murder rate would fall only moderately after the first call-in; it was after the second set of call-ins, "the second turn of the crank," as he put it, that the mechanism would really take hold. By the end of the year, homicides in Cincinnati in 2007 were down twenty-four per cent from 2006. The trend continued into 2008—by April, there had been a fifty-per-cent reduction in gang-related homicides. Kennedy had made good on his guarantee to the Mayor.

The fourth call-in, held in June, 2008, was a disaster. In contrast to the previous call-ins, during which the young men had been split up into smaller groups, this time a hundred and twenty of them were brought together at the same time, in the same room. In retrospect, this was one of several mistakes that the team made. "We lost control of the room," Whalen said. Also, for the first time, the team hadn't rehearsed, and, partly as a result, "We went off script," he said. Some street workers cursed, and one started flirting with a gang member's girlfriend. ("Girl, you fine. What you doin' hangin' with these thugs?") Other street workers referred to gang members as niggas, which the cops saw as a violation of propriety and state authority.

Kennedy told me, "Some people within the group had become hungry for that personal transformation, when the individual offenders jump up and declare themselves done with the thug life, and everyone cries. At the June meeting, they didn't get that reaction, and they ended up pushing too hard."

In the months after the call-in, the murder rate spiked upward. "We almost provoked them to violence," Whalen told me. "They went out of the room challenged."

Streicher threatened to pull the cops off the team if their concerns were not addressed. The Mayor assured Streicher that the mistakes would not be repeated, and persuaded the police to stay involved. Thanks to Greg Baker's work as project manager, C.I.R.V. did not go off the rails. The next call-in, scheduled for the fall of 2008, was moved back to December, in part to give the team a chance to regroup. For Kennedy, the important thing was that "the system self-corrected," he said. "That's huge."

Since its success in Boston, Kennedy's anti-gang-violence strategy has been tried in some sixty other cities. (Kennedy's method should not be confused with one devised in Chicago by Gary Slutkin, a physician and epidemiologist, which is sometimes referred to as CeaseFire. Slutkin's strategy employs community members to mediate potential shootings while also pushing for behavioral change in high-risk individuals and communities.) Kennedy helped Minneapolis implement a violence-prevention strategy in June of 1996, and homicides in the summer months fell from forty-two that year to eight in 1997. But in Minneapolis "the team lost focus," Kennedy told me, and "all the complicated parts of the mechanism didn't mesh." A similar thing happened, over the next five years, in Indianapolis and Stockton, California. Spectacular early results proved difficult to sustain. "Ceasefire takes a lot of manpower," Wayne Hose, a former chief of police in Stockton, told me. "And you have to have people who believe in it. You have to have someone who will call the

D.A.'s office and say, 'Why aren't your people coming to the meetings?' " Even in Boston, Ceasefire didn't last; the program was abandoned in 2000, partly as a result of a personality conflict among team members. By 2001, the number of homicides had risen more than a hundred per cent over the 1999 level, and it has remained high. In 2007, Gary French began to implement a renewed Ceasefire approach, and so far the results have been promising.

Franklin Zimring, a professor of law at the University of California at Berkeley, who is a leading deterrence scholar, told me that one reason that Ceasefire's effectiveness is difficult to predict in any given city is that Kennedy's results have not been subjected to a rigorous independent analysis. "Ceasefire is more a theory of treatment than a proven strategy," he said, adding, "It's odd that no one has ever said, 'O.K., here are the youths who were not part of the Ceasefire program in Boston, let's compare them to the youths who were. And no one has followed up with any long-range studies of the criminal behavior of the group that was in the program, either. We just don't have the evidence, and until we do we can't evaluate how effective Ceasefire really is."

When I relayed Zimring's comments to Kennedy, he laughed. "Frank still doesn't get it," he said. "There's plenty of research, but it's not focussed on the impact on the people in the call-ins, because the strategy isn't just about the people in the room." He added, "When you have a couple of meetings and homicide citywide goes down forty per cent, it's not because the forty guys you've talked to have turned their lives around. There are a thousand guys on the street you haven't talked to. But the forty get the word out to the thousand—which ruins them as controls for the kind of evaluation that Frank's talking about."

Perhaps Kennedy's greatest success to date has occurred in High Point, North Carolina, a small city, of some ninety thousand people, that is known for producing furniture. (The entire city smells like varnish.) The High Point Strategy, as it has come to be known, was aimed at public drug dealing, not gang violence, but the methodology was largely the same. In 2004, Kennedy persuaded Jim Fealy, chief of the High Point police, to apply his problem-oriented approach to a long-standing open-air drug market in a neighborhood called West End. Fealy and his predecessor had tried for years to shut down the market with periodic sweeps and stings. "We would go in and arrest 'em, and things would quiet down for a few months, but then new guys would be back," he said. The Reverend Jim Summey, who was at the time the pastor of the English Road Baptist Church, in the center of West End, told me that on Sunday mornings there were so many drug dealers, prostitutes, and johns on the sidewalk in front of the church that worshippers coming for services couldn't steer their cars into the parking lot.

Fealy was seated at his desk when I spoke to him; a photograph behind him showed him in full SWAT regalia. "Ev-

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eryone knows I'm as conservative as they come," he drawled. "My approach as a cop had always been either arrest the problem or scare the problem away with high-profile prosecutions. You know, 'Cuff'em and stuff'em.' But in West End the problem always came back." When he first heard about Kennedy's strategy, he thought it was ridiculous, but he agreed to meet him. "David said, 'Give me a half hour before you decide I'm crazy.' And at the end of that half hour I was still sitting there."

Kennedy's strategy not only closed down the West End drug market; the drug market disappeared the day after the first call-in. "We had worked on these problems for twenty years and got nowhere, and in one day it was over," Fealy said. "In one day. Honestly, I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes."

It's unclear whether any of the dozen or so High Point drug dealers who called the services number ultimately left behind the life of crime. None of the root-cause problems behind drugs and crime were solved; drug dealing may have moved indoors, or to other neighborhoods, or to nearby cities. But public drug dealing never returned to West End, and, once the threat was removed from the streets, the community reclaimed its neighborhood. Within weeks, residents were planting flowers in their gardens, and in the spring of 2005 the community threw a barbecue for the police.

Colonel Dean Esserman, chief of the Providence Police Department, brought Kennedy's strategy to open-air drug markets in his city, beginning in 2006, and so far the results have been spectacular and sustained. Esserman, a former assistant district attorney in New York City, now gives a speech he calls "Getting Ready for David Kennedy." When I asked Esserman what it takes to get ready, he responded with one word: "Failure." By that, he said, he meant "the failure of the idea that you can deal with the problem of drugs by arresting it." It had taken Esserman years of work on narcotics cases in New York to reach this state of readiness. "As a younger prosecutor, I wasn't ready. Maybe as a younger cop, Chief Streicher wasn't ready, either."

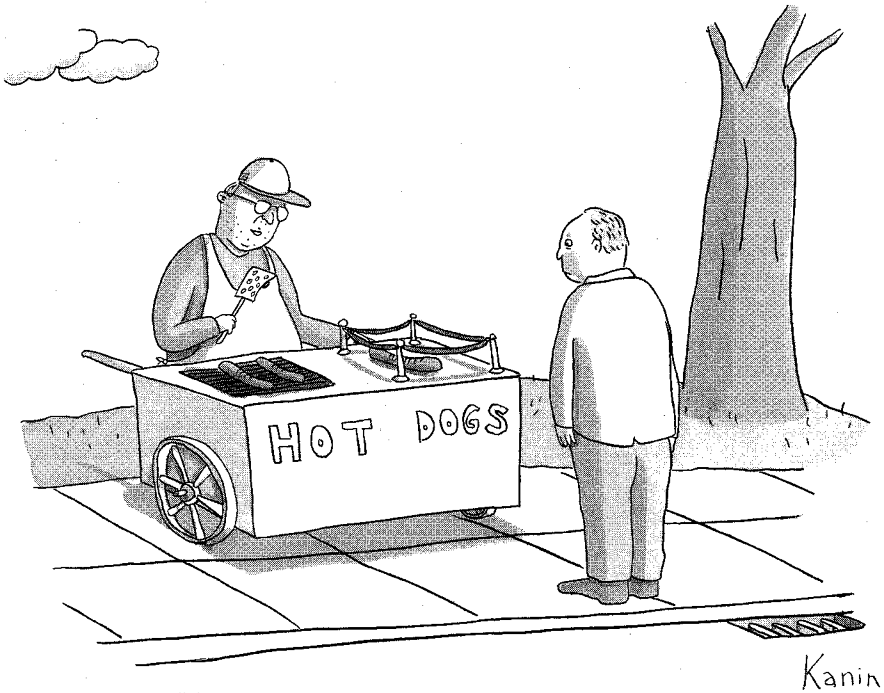
The next step for Kennedy and his colleagues is to expand these regional successes into what he calls a "national standard of practice." To that end, Kennedy is working with Jeremy Travis, the president of John Jay College, on a national network of people trained in the use of Ceasefire-style gang-violence and drug-market strategies. Kennedy, who is now the director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay, has submitted a white paper to Eric Holder, the Attorney General, outlining the proposal, and he and Travis plan to announce the National Network for Safe Communities on June 15th, at the annual meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors, in Providence.

"Clearly this stuff works," Travis said. "David has proved that when you communicate directly with offenders, tell them their actions have consequences—not abstract consequences but direct, immediate ones—and then offer them a way out, that it can have an enormous deterrence value." He added, "The last ten years have served as a proof of concept. In the next ten, we need to build a network that can institutionalize and sustain these practices around the country."

Could a methodology that works on gangs also work on other groups—terrorists, say? "The group dynamics are similar to the gang dynamics Ceasefire deals with," Kennedy said. "People don't think you could deter terrorists with a moral argument, but maybe you could." Marc Sageman, a terrorism expert who is the author of the 2008 book "Leaderless Jihad," told me, "There is quite a lot of evidence in the terrorism literature that this type of gang-intervention program can work, if you apply it to terrorists in the early stages of the radicalization process. Then it could very well work—because there's nothing deterministic about becoming a terrorist. But at a certain point, once terrorism becomes something one does for a higher cause, I don't think this type of method would work." Scott Atran, an anthropologist who has done field work with jihadist groups and is also on the faculty at John Jay, told me that Kennedy's "community-based ideas seem to jibe with what I see works with young people in neighborhoods where friends go off in bunches to jihad. Few ever join jihad alone, and they almost always commit to it, including suicide bombings, for love of friends and family." He added, "There's also a strong dose of 'jihadi cool' that clerics can't penetrate too well, unless they're plugged into the youth culture."

Stakes were high at the December, 2008, call-in. Kennedy went to Cincinnati for a rehearsal the week before, in an effort to avoid the mistakes of the disastrous June call-in. On December 10th, I accompanied him to the Hamilton County Courthouse. Kennedy wore his usual dark shirt, dark suit, and dark tie. The hall outside the courtroom was crowded with the heterogeneous group that makes up the C.I.R.V. team.

Jim Whalen was there, with his nineteen-year-old daughter, Amy, a student



"I'm saving that one for someone really special."

at the University of Cincinnati who works for Robin Engel at the policing institute. Chief Streicher was also there, scanning the crowd. His gunmetal gaze alighted on the Reverend Pete Mingo, a former serial robber and gang member, who is now one of the C.I.R.V. street workers. "When I was a younger cop, I used to chase Pete all over the city," Streicher said. He laughed softly. "Now look at us."

Members of the Vortex unit, in white dress shirts and creased blue pants, were on hand to provide security. Captain Gerard excitedly told Kennedy about the unit's recent crackdown on the Northside Taliband, one of the largest and best-organized gangs in the city. Some of its members had been warned at an earlier call-in, they didn't listen, and now an example was being made of them. But, unlike the Vortex unit's zero-tolerance strikes of two years earlier, which enraged the community and provoked widespread criticism of the police, the Northside Taliband roundup used social-network-analysis software to identify and target only key players in the gang. The software, which can be used to map interpersonal dynamics in anything from business organizations to infectious-disease outbreaks and terrorist groups, represents people as nodes and assigns numeric values to their connectedness. If Joe knows Peter and Peter knows Bob, then the link between Joe and Peter gets a value of two; the connection between Joe and Bob gets a one. "The guiding theoretical principle is that the nodes that are more central in the network have certain advantages over other nodes, which enables us to predict that they will perform better than others," Steve Borgatti, a professor at the University of Kentucky who created the software, explained to me.

As in the earlier gang audits, the University of Cincinnati researchers collected information from the cops, but this time they focussed on relationships between individuals in one gang, rather than on connections between gangs. Engel's group asked questions like "Where do this one's friends live? Who was with him in the car when he was arrested? Who bailed him out of jail?" Using this information, they were able to identify the central nodes of the Northside Taliband, whose removal would severely damage the gang's structure.

In order to affect all the smaller social networks within the Northside Taliband group, which numbered ninety-six members, the cops needed to arrest twenty-five men, who were identified by name, and by photograph. Their pictures, along with their positions in their social networks, were displayed on screens in police cruisers (cops could click a tab to see a suspect's tattoos); ultimately, the police were able to arrest all twenty-five. The prosecutors on the C.I.R.V. team expedited their indictments; three had already been indicted under federal drug and weapons charges, and were facing long prison sentences. Other members of the Northside Taliband were so impressed by the cops' precision that they had started turning themselves in, hoping to make a deal while there was still time. So many were showing up at district headquarters, Streicher told Kennedy, that the cops had to put a sign-up sheet at the desk.

As a policing tool, Kennedy's methodology had been a big success in Cincinnati. In 2008, murder was down over all, arrests had declined, and morale in the department was high. (The murder count was up slightly in the first quarter of 2009, but was still significantly lower than comparable periods in 2006 and 2007.) Whalen had experienced his own personal transformation: "We will never engage in this kind of gang work again without academic support," he told me fervently. "No police department should." The initiative had also been a public-relations coup for the cops; the media coverage of the Northside Taliband strike had been very favorable—in contrast with the reception that the Vortex unit had got in 2006. In November, during the Northside Taliband crackdown, Gerard and other members of his unit attended a community-board meeting in the Northside and received a standing ovation.

The social-services piece of Ceasefire has been less successful. More than three hundred and fifty people have called the C.I.R.V. phone number, seeking help and employment—far more than the service providers can find jobs for. A hundred got jobs, but only fifty-three of them remain employed. C.I.R.V. did persuade the city to change its policy of not hiring convicted felons, and three were placed in low-level city jobs; one of those men subsequently failed the mandated regular drug tests. Cincinnati is a center of the health-care industry, and Victor Garcia had hoped to persuade some companies that do contract work in the city's health-care sector to hire convicted felons, but he has had no success.

Garcia has grown disenchanted with what he sees as Kennedy's over-emphasis on the deterrence component of Ceasefire, which he believes comes at the expense of the program's social-service aspect. "I'd like it to do more to save the kids on the street," he told me, with some frustration, in January. When I mentioned that to Kennedy, he said tersely, "Look, we would all like to save everyone, but we can't. We don't know how to do that yet, and Ceasefire is fundamentally about what can be done. It's engineering, not evangelism." In May, Garcia was dismissed from the Ceasefire team.

Dante Ingram, who was also at the courthouse that day, lost his job in phone sales in December, 2008, when he was arrested in a domestic-violence incident and spent eighteen days in jail and twenty days under house arrest. After that, C.I.R.V. managed to place him in another job, in the receiving department of a warehouse. Ingram was unable to hold that position, either, and was considering returning to the gang. Despite Ingram's difficulties, Stan Ross, who was impressed by his determination to change his life, offered him a job as a C.I.R.V. street worker. "I love it," Ingram said of his work. So far, he had found jobs for two other men, one in a gas station and one as a janitor. Among his new duties is making sure that these men get to work on time, and he sometimes takes them and picks them up himself. "A lot of these guys have never had a job before," Ingram said.

Streicher told Kennedy that he had found employment for one young man himself. The man had approached the Chief after an earlier call-in, saying that he wanted to get out of the gang, but he had a felony conviction and doubted he could get a job. "I'll get you a job," Streicher said. "You want to be a roofer? My friend can get you on a roof tomorrow." The man accepted, and, so far, he has been gainfully employed.

As the Chief walked away, Kennedy shook his head in disbelief and said, "That's not the Tom Streicher I knew two years ago." ♦

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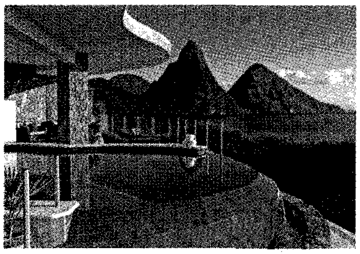

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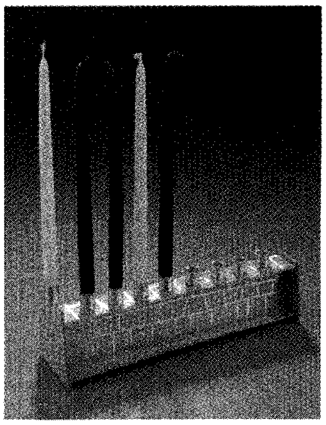

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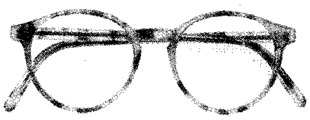

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TRUE STORY

BY PAUL RUDNICK

My name is Mike Henkle, and I'm a devout Mormon from Provo, Utah. I know that some of my convictions may upset more liberal people, but I'm only asking you to keep an open mind. Because just this past week something happened to my family and me, and it's something that all of us, on each side of the political divide, need to think about.

Beth and I have been married for almost eighteen years, and we've got three great kids, which, in Mormon terms, means we're barren. But give us time. Last week, for a sort of second honeymoon, we loaded the whole family into our Jeep Wagoneer and headed East, to Massachusetts, to visit my brother Steve and his beautiful wife, Jen. I didn't realize at the time that Massachusetts is a state where gay marriage is now legal.

So we're driving through upstate New York, and getting closer to Massachusetts, and we're all singing one of our favorite travel hymns, "Jesus Is Under the Hood." And, as we're singing, my kids are also trying to spot license plates from different states, and seven-year-old Ethan shouts, "I see a new one! Look, Daddy, on that license plate it says 'Massachusetts—The Anal Sex State'!"

"Mike?" my wife said.

"I see it, too!" four-year-old Ruth cried, and then she asked, "Daddy, what's anal sex?"

"Is it something the Pilgrims brought over from England?" Ethan asked.

I don't like to lie to my children, so I replied, "Yes, it is."

"Like scurvy," Beth said.

As we crossed the border into Massachusetts, everything looked just beautiful, with all the quaintness of picture-postcard New England. We passed a small town square, and I noticed that a work crew was removing a life-size bronze statue of Paul Revere, which a plaque said had been erected in 1820. The workmen were replacing Paul Revere with a more contemporary statue, a tall figure in a simple black suit, who I thought was Abraham Lincoln.

"Look at that, kids," I said, pointing to the statue. "There's Lincoln, one of our greatest Presidents."

"That's not Lincoln," Beth said, as we drove closer to the statue. "It's Rachel Maddow."

I was beginning to feel apprehensive. We stopped at a roadside stand to buy some cider and apples as a gift for my brother and his family. Amid the colorful bins of dried corn and shelves full of maple syrup was a hand-lettered sign reading "50% Gay Discount." When I went to pay for our bushel basket of wholesome fare, I asked the cashier if I'd really pay only half price if I were gay.

"Of course," she replied. "It's the law."

My wife looked at me. "Pay for it, Sharon," she told me.

"Sharon?" I said.

"We've been together for eighteen years now," Beth told the cashier, "although some people think we look more like sisters."

"Why did you do that?" I asked Beth, as we loaded the produce into our trunk.

"It's a big discount."

"But I don't look like a woman," I protested. "Do I?"

"Should we get some more beets?" Beth asked.

Now I was really confused. As we pulled into Steve and Jen's driveway, I saw that their mailbox was painted with rainbow stripes. "Steve, what's that all about?" I asked, as we shook hands.

"If I didn't do that, we'd never get any mail," he explained. "The mail carrier would just throw it into the street."

As I admired Steve's new carport, many happy-looking same-sex couples walked by, some of them holding hands.

"Don't say anything," Steve whispered. "Just smile and wave."

"What would happen if I didn't?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "there's this perfectly nice couple who live next door to us, Ted and Eric. But last week I mistakenly asked Ted about his partner, and Ted got a little chilly and said, 'He's not my partner; he's my husband.' And that night our house got egged."

"Oh, my Lord," I said.

"Smile and wave," Steve said, as five more gay couples, all pushing strollers, moved along the sidewalk. "And when you look at their kids," he cautioned me, "be careful, because sometimes they're adopted, or from donor sperm. So don't say, 'Gee, your baby looks just like you.' Instead, say, 'My, what a wonderful nontraditional family, and what a real baby.' "

Once we were inside, Steve and Jen pulled all the curtains shut.

"Sometimes we get gawkers," Jen said. "They don't see many straight people around here."

"This sweet couple at the mall, Amber and Jessalyn, they took our picture," Steve said. "They said they were going to e-mail it to Amber's mom in Brookline, because she collects pictures of straight people. Sometimes she puts them on mugs."

I was growing seriously disturbed. "Come on," I told everyone. "We'd better get to church."

We all piled into Steve's minivan, and as we rolled through town we passed a stately Federal-style brick building with a sign reading "Gaychovia."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Since the bailout," Steve said, "most of the banks here went gay."

"And look at the money," Jen said, showing us the coins in her change purse. Barney Frank's profile was on the quarter, and Neil Patrick Harris was on the dime.

"Hon, I'll need some singles for the collection plate," Jen told Steve.

"Here you go," Steve said, as he passed Jen some bills. "I can give you five Ellens for a Milk."

Once we were settled into the pews of the local Mormon church, I breathed a whole lot easier.

"See," I said to my kids, "it's just like home."

"Please open your hymnals," said the minister, a genial, ruddy-cheeked fellow, who was clearly filled with the Holy Spirit. "We'll begin today's service with selections from 'Billy Elliot.' " ♦

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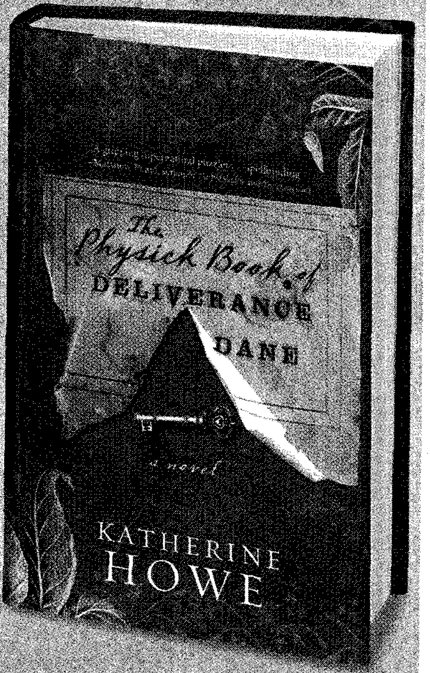

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LETTER FROM ANDALUSIA

LORCA'S BONES

Can Spain finally confront its civil-war past?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

In the Andalusian city of Granada, a little road leads uphill, past the forested ramparts of the Alhambra, to a cemetery. The earth there is a deep, raw red, and the olive trees that punctuate it are green and gray and very old. The cemetery wall is high and long, the same color as the earth, and it is crowned with rough clay tiles.

Twenty feet or so along the wall from its southwestern corner, there are egg-size gouges in the plastered brick. The marks are impacts from bullets. In the summer of 1936, more than a thousand people were brought to the cemetery in open trucks, day after day, to be shot against the wall by firing squads. American tourists who were staying in the little hotels down the lane later told of their horror at being awakened before dawn by the grinding gears of the trucks as they went uphill, and then, minutes later, hearing the volleys of gunfire. On August 16th, thirty people were shot at the cemetery, while down in the city the poet Federico García Lorca was taken into custody. Two days later, Lorca was murdered, along with two bullfighters and a schoolteacher.

Lorca was handsome and dark-haired, and walked with a curious, flat-footed gait that made him instantly recognizable in Granada, where he had grown up. He was a son of the local élite; his father was a wealthy *granadino* landowner. But, in what was a conservative, provincial city, the family was also associated with the Spanish Republic and its liberal values; one of Lorca's sisters was married to Granada's Socialist mayor, who was among those killed on August 16th. With his 1928 book of poetry, "Gypsy Ballads," and his 1932 play, "Blood Wedding," Lorca had become Spain's most renowned poet and dramatist. Among his closest friends were Salvador Dalí, with whom he had a turbulent love affair, and Luis Buñuel, the film director. Lorca had toured Spain since 1931 with his own theatre group, La Barraca, for the Republic's Ministry of Education. At the age of thirty-eight, and more or less openly gay, Lorca was a highly visible figure with known Republican sympathies. And that, in the Granada of the summer of 1936, was enough to get a person killed.

On July 17, 1936, a forty-three-year-old general named Francisco Franco had launched a military rebellion against Spain's left-leaning government. A cabal of military officers seized control of Granada three days later. In the three-year civil war that ensued, Franco and his ultranationalist Falangists received military assistance from Hitler and Mussolini, and more than half a million Spaniards were killed before the Republic finally succumbed. In April, 1939, Franco formally initiated his dictatorship. It lasted until his death, in 1975.

The old execution ground at the cemetery was deserted when I visited late one recent afternoon, but a bouquet of red roses lay drying against the wall, beneath a cluster of bullet gouges. The impacts were roughly at the level of a standing man's groin. I said as much to my companion, Juan Antonio Díaz, a professor of English and German philology at the University of Granada. He remarked, "Not if you were kneeling. They would hit you at head height."

A moment later, Díaz cursed. "They have taken the plaque. I knew they would." He pointed to a blank patch on the wall. A few months earlier, Granada's Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, of which he was a member, had installed a small plaque: "To the victims of Francoism who were shot at this wall." Without it, there was no sign that anything dramatic or historic had ever occurred here.

Lorca's grave, by the side of a road at the edge of a nearby village, was also long unmarked—he and the bullfighters and the schoolteacher were buried there together, secretly and hastily. In 1966, Ian Gibson, an Irish-born historian who became Lorca's biographer, identified the probable site, but the bodies remained where their killers had dumped them. Then, late last year, a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, ordered that Lorca be dug up.

Garzón is famous for finding novel ways to use the law in the name of historical justice. In 1998, he invoked international statutes to secure the arrest, in London, of the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. This April, he opened a formal investigation into torture at Guantánamo Bay. His exhumation order was seen as a historic challenge to the silence in Spain about the Franco years—the first official inquiry into the dictatorship's repression. But it set off a raging public debate in Spain. The problem is that although the Spanish Civil War ended seventy years ago, victor and vanquished were never truly reconciled.

The conflict lives on in unexpected ways. With Garzón's order came the news that Lorca's own relatives—a group of nieces and nephews—opposed his exhumation. (In fact, they had said so before, but only now did the matter acquire urgency.) In a tersely worded press communiqué, they said, "We reiterate our desire, as legitimate as those of other relatives, that the remains of Federico García Lorca repose forever where they are." This was incomprehensible to many in Spain and gave rise to all sorts of rumors—that the family was embarrassed about the poet's homosexuality; that it had already privately dug him up and reburied him years before. His relatives had said that they wanted to avoid "a media circus." Instead, they found themselves in a fight over Lorca's body.

Federico García Lorca, Spain's most renowned poet and dramatist, in 1935. He was shot a year later by a Nationalist firing squad.

FUNDACIÓN FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

Until Franco's death, a textbook titled "El Parvulito" was standard issue in Spain's preschools. In it, the civil war was introduced to four- and five-year-olds on a page labelled "The National Uprising." Under a picture showing a serious-looking soldier, bayonet drawn, it reads, "Some years ago, Spain was very badly governed. Every day there were shots fired in the streets and the churches were burned down. To stop all of this, Franco rose up with the army, and, after three years of war, managed to throw out the enemies of the Fatherland. The Spaniards named Franco their Chief or Strongman"—*Jefe o Caudillo*—"and he has been governing Spain gloriously since 1936."

More than four hundred thousand Spaniards spent time in concentration camps between 1939 and 1947. And over the next three decades, Spaniards continued to be persecuted for political reasons; thousands were executed by firing squad and garrotte. Half a million fled the country. In the jittery, attenuated glasnost that characterized the transition to democracy after Franco's death, however, politicians adopted a don't-look-back policy. In 1977, Spain's parliament passed an amnesty law that sealed the past in what became known as the *pacto de olvido*, or pact of oblivion. That's how things stood until a decade ago, when "historical memory" groups, formed by the descendants of murdered Republicans, Communists, and anarchists, began to dig up some of their bodies.

The memory groups' activities inspired a national lobby for a reckoning with Spain's past, but the conservative Partido Popular of President José María Aznar, who was in power from 1996 to 2004, was hostile to such demands. Aznar was succeeded by the Socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, however, and in 2007 Spain's parliament approved a Law of Historical Memory, which required the state to support the exhumation of thousands of mass graves. The bill also granted citizenship to the descendants of Spanish Republicans who had been forced to flee the country between 1936 and 1955. More than a million people, most of them in Latin America, became eligible, including as many as two hundred thousand Cubans. In February, the first of the new passports were issued.

Despite the law, Spain's mass graves remain largely unexhumed. Maribel Brenes, a historian who is the president of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Granada, has compiled a map of a hundred and twenty-five of them in Granada Province alone, containing twelve thousand victims. Her motive wasn't personal; one of her grandfathers had fought for Franco. "It's not about revenge, it's about documenting history," she said. "We Spaniards are hypocrites. We threw our hands in the air over what Pinochet did in South America, but no one has done anything about our own *desaparecidos*"—disappeared ones.

Last October, Baltasar Garzón, in response to a petition filed by thirteen historical-memory associations, decreed that Franco and thirty-four others were guilty of crimes against humanity—"a preconceived and systematic plan of elimination of political opponents through mass killings, tortures, exile, and forced disappearances." He tallied more than a hundred and fourteen thousand victims. Declaring Spain's 1977 amnesty null and void with regard to human-rights violations, Garzón ordered an investigation and the exhumation of nineteen mass graves, including the one believed to contain Lorca's remains.

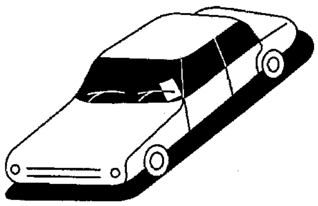
Emilio Silva, who founded Spain's historical-memory movement, called Garzón's order "the condemnation of Francoism that Spain's parliament has never dared to do itself." But there was also anger at Garzón. Former President Aznar, whose grandfather and father both served under Franco, spoke darkly about people determined to "destroy" Spain. Then Javier Zaragoza, Spain's prosecutor-general, filed an appeal against Garzón's order, challenging his jurisdiction and accusing him of carrying out an "inquisition."

Zaragoza managed to put a temporary halt to the exhumations. If his appeal succeeded—and there was a decent chance that it would—Garzón's investigation would be dead. Garzón responded with a preëmptive and risky move. On November 18th, he suddenly announced that he was dropping his federal case and instead referring the crimes he had identified to Spain's provincial courts. By doing so, Garzón kept the investigation going. There was no doubt, however, that he had suffered a setback.

Two days later, on the thirty-third anniversary of Franco's death, around fifty people gathered in a rooftop room in a cultural center in Madrid to express their support for Garzón. An elderly woman who had spent time in Franco's concentration camps spoke, as did Ian Gibson. The Valencian folksinger Paco Ibáñez, famous for putting Lorca's verses to music, got up and sang.

Afterward, I went with Ibáñez and Fanny Rubio, a poet who had helped to organize the gathering, to meet Garzón in Riofrío, a café across the street from the Audiencia Nacional, Spain's high court. We sat in a corner booth. Garzón arrived a few minutes later, with one of his bodyguards. (The militant Basque separatist group E.T.A. has targeted Garzón for assassination; one plot, revealed last week, involved a bottle of poisoned Cognac.) The bodyguard, a young man wearing a duster, stood about ten feet away. Garzón, who is fifty-three and has a distinctive gray streak in his hair, ordered chamomile-mint tea. For legal reasons, he could not speak to me directly about the case, but he allowed me to sit in on his conversation with Ibáñez and Rubio.

Garzón said that he had found himself on his own in the high-court case, without any allies. Senior officials in the Socialist government felt that he had gone too far, and were not willing to back him. But the battle was not over. Transferring the cases to Spain's provincial courts was a sort of force multiplier. Now it wasn't just up to him. Judges all over the country would be obliged to investigate, and to do so seriously, whatever their personal beliefs. Presented with a crime, they were required to look at all available evidence, including the grave sites. He had made a thousand Lorcas possible.



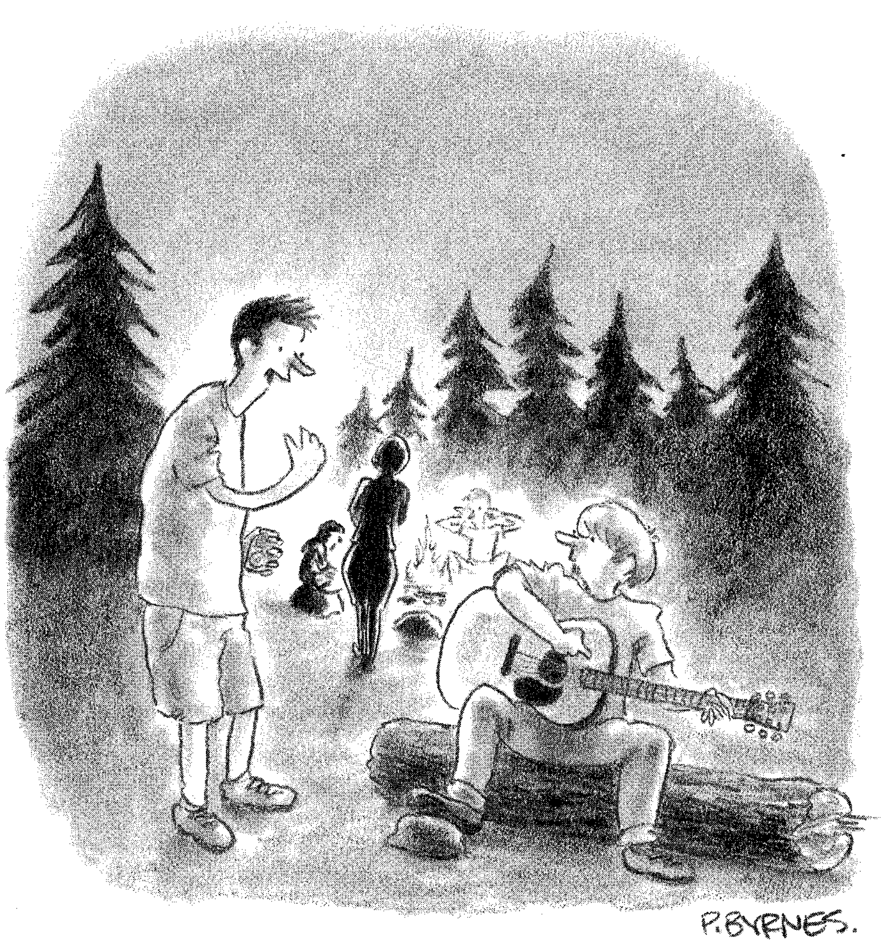
"What about Lorca's relatives saying they don't want him dug up?" Ibáñez asked.

"Imagine if, as an investigating judge, I was shown to a house where a body was buried in the basement," Garzón said. "And, when I ordered it to be dug up, the family living in the house said, 'No, you can't, that's our uncle, and we want to leave him there!' Would I leave him there just because they said so?"

Francisco Galadí, the grandson of one of the two bullfighters killed with Lorca, is a ruggedly handsome man of sixty. When I met him in Granada, he was wearing jeans and a black leather jacket. He had worked in the local brewery, Cerveza Alhambra, until recently, when he had been forced to take early retirement. With time on his hands, he had joined the historical-memory association. Before his father had died, a few years ago, he had begged Francisco to recover his grandfather's remains. "He told me, 'Don't leave him lying there like a dog,' " Galadí said. "I've been fighting for that. What I didn't expect was that the Lorca family would object."

Galadí's grandfather, also named Francisco, had been a popular banderillero—a torero who makes the bull charge, plunging darts adorned with bright flags into its neck. He was also an anarchist. For a few futile days in July, 1936, he had led the only resistance in the city of Granada to the military takeover. He and a handful of fellow *anarquistas* had held out in the Albaicín, the old Moorish quarter, under a withering artillery barrage, but eventually their ammunition ran out. "They were in a cave at the foot of the Alhambra, and my father, who was twelve at the time, had gone there to say goodbye. He told him, '*Vete, hijo*'—'Go, son.' " After his son left, the bullfighter surrendered. "They say that he was tied to a horse-drawn cart and that they drove him through the streets, beating him with sticks," his grandson said. "They say he was one of the bravest, most fearless, of men.”

Once, when the younger Galadí was doing his obligatory military service, in the late sixties, a colonel had asked him if he was related to “the famous Galadí.” He smiled proudly. “You know, in those days, Federico García Lorca was known only by other members of the élite, those people who could read and go to the theatre. But my grandfather, a bullfighter, was well known by everyone, because this was a workers’ city, and they liked the bulls.” Galadí paused, and then added, “I’ve lived with my parents’ fear all my life. My mother is eighty-five now. She was twelve when it happened. They killed half the people in her neighborhood! But it wasn’t just the war, it was the years of repression afterward, of fear and humiliation. She used to say ‘Shush!’ whenever I tried to ask about my grandfather. ‘It’s that they are real *hijos de puta*,’ she would say. And the rancor is still there today, you know? But they are the rancorous ones. I’ve heard there are some who are going around saying, ‘We should have killed more of them.’ But I’m not interested in looking for the grandchildren of those who did the killing. All I want is to exhume the remains of my grandfather and to give him a dignified burial. The Francoists can express themselves as they like, as they always have.”



“Come on, we’re all going to sit around the campfire and play our iPods.”

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Along with Franco, Ramón Serrano Súñer was one of the men Garzón charged with “crimes against humanity.” He was Franco’s brother-in-law, and served as Interior Minister during the civil war. As Foreign Minister from 1940 to 1942, he negotiated personally with Hitler and Mussolini. He was instrumental in arranging the Gestapo’s arrest of Spanish exiles in Occupied France. Some were returned to Spain and, in many cases, summarily shot; at least fifteen thousand were sent to Mauthausen and other concentration camps. In 1948, Serrano Súñer was the first public figure in Spain to admit that Lorca had been killed by Nationalists, though he blamed “uncontrollables.” Until then, Franco’s regime had denied any knowledge of the crime, and the Nationalist media had tried to blame it on “the Reds.”

Serrano Súñer died in 2003, at the age of a hundred and one, but his son, Don Fernando Serrano Súñer y Polo, agreed to meet me at my hotel in Madrid for tea. Don Fernando, who is in his seventies, wore a sharply tailored English suit. His mother and Franco’s wife were sisters. He remarked that Spain’s Falangist movement had been “misinterpreted,” and that he found Garzón’s inquiry into the past “a little depressing.” “It is very pitiful that we are like we are, all these years later,” he said. “Two of my father’s brothers were *fusilados* and buried in a mass grave outside Madrid. In other words, not all the victims are Franco’s.” Don Fernando said that he admired the way that Americans had reconciled after their Civil War, and he proceeded to recite, from memory, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in Spanish.

The closest thing to a national civil-war monument in Spain is Valle de los Caídos—the Valley of the Fallen—centered on a vast subterranean basilica that Franco ordered built in 1940. Burrowed deep into the granite of the Sierra de Guaderrama mountains outside Madrid and topped by a five-hundred-foot stone cross, the monument took almost twenty years, and the labor of thousands of Republican prisoners of war, to complete. Although it was billed as a resting place for the dead of both sides, and contains the remains of some forty thousand Nationalists and Republicans, it commemorates nothing so much as Franco’s megalomania and triumphalism. When he inaugurated the necropolis, in 1959, Franco spoke about how his enemies had been made to “bite the dust of defeat.” In the main hall, the only marked tombs are those of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange Party, and, since 1975, of Franco himself. (The other remains are in sealed catacombs.) Not surprisingly, Valle de los Caídos has become a sanctuary for Spain’s diehard Falangists.

Last November 20th, the anniversary of Franco’s death, his followers came, as they always do, to pay their respects, although, in accordance with the new Law of Historical Memory, police had been ordered to prevent openly Fascist displays. Franco’s tombstone was a slab of granite in the floor, etched with only his name and a cross. There were bouquets of red and white roses, and a wheel of carnations. Several well-dressed older people bowed their heads. A small group of plainclothes policemen stood watching. A man in a red jacket approached, gave a Fascist salute, and dropped to one knee. He then stood up, and saluted once more. One of the policemen came trotting over, but did nothing. A moment later, two more men, with closely cropped hair and small, trimmed mustaches, met at the tomb and gave simultaneous Fascist salutes of their own.

Lorca was buried less than five miles from Granada, on the outskirts of the village of Alfacar. Following the route that Lorca's executioners took, Juan Antonio Díaz and I drove first to the nearby village of Víznar. We parked in a little square next to an eighteenth-century archbishop's palace, which, in 1936, was turned into a military command center. It will soon be converted into a five-star hotel. A small road, cut like an elbow around a deep gulch, led to Alfacar past what had once been a children's summer camp called La Colonia. In the summer of 1936, La Colonia was used as a holding center for the victims of the Nationalists' purge in the area. (There were other execution grounds, including the city cemetery.) According to Gibson, Lorca arrived as a prisoner before daybreak on August 18th, as did the bullfighters and the schoolteacher. They were then driven a short distance down the road, and taken for a *paseo*—a stroll.

We walked on that same road. Below us was the *vega*, the greensward that surrounds Granada, which Lorca wrote about in his 1921 "Meditations and Allegories of Water":

> I was returning from the dry lands. Down in the hollow lay the vega, swathed in its blue shimmer. Through the recumbent air of the summer night floated the fluttering ribbons of the crickets.

We saw rectangular stands of white poplars, as well as the shining roofs of new industrial warehouses, strung along the way to Lorca's birthplace, the village of Fuente Vaqueros. This view, minus the warehouses, must have been one of the last things Lorca saw.

Behind an apartment building, we came to a fenced-in sliver of hillside which, some years ago, was belatedly preserved as a Lorca memorial park. At its far edge was a lone olive tree, and near it a small stone marker: "To the memory of Federico García Lorca and all the victims of the civil war." It was the approximate spot where, according to Gibson's sources, including one of the gravediggers, Lorca and the others had been shot and buried in a trench "behind an old *olivo* on a bend in the road." There was nobody else around; a pair of motorcyclists came racing past, breaking the stillness. Walking deeper into the park, we found a stone wall inlaid with Andalusian blue, green, and white tiles painted with Lorca's verses. One, from a 1918 poem, "Autumn Song," reads, "If death is death, what then of poets, and of sleeping things, if no one remembers them?"

On May 29th, the Granada judge assigned to rule on Lorca's exhumation recused herself from the case. This would have sent it to the Supreme Court of Spain, which was viewed as unsympathetic to Garzón. (Two days earlier, the court had agreed to hear a lawsuit, filed by a far-right group, charging Garzón with "prevarication" in the course of his investigation.) But, on June 9th, Granada's prosecutor filed a grievance appealing the judge's decision, potentially returning the case to her. Granada's historical-memory association, meanwhile, declared that if Spain's courts continued to stonewall its efforts, it would request that the graves be opened as an "archeological site." Amid these developments, Lorca's family was silent.

When I asked Juan Antonio Díaz about the Lorca family, he shook his head. "Any normal person, with a close relative—a father, an uncle, a son—who has been mysteriously disappeared, and is known to have been murdered, has to feel the minimal interest in where he might be. In the case of Lorca, this is even greater, because Lorca isn't only the patrimony of one family but of all decent people of this world. Normal people want to know what happened, and where Lorca is. But it seems there are people who are not normal, and are incapable of resolving their personal and family traumas."

Laura García Lorca, the poet's niece, has a breathtaking view of the Alhambra from the living room of her apartment, on the top floor of a building in central Granada. A former actress, with the large, expressive brown eyes of her late uncle, Laura heads the Federico García Lorca Foundation. On the day I visited, she appeared overwrought. All of the media attention, she said, had been extremely stressful.

"We have, I think, never communicated our feelings well," she said, with a sigh. "So—why don't we want him dug up? As far as the remains of Federico García Lorca are concerned, for us—and these are things that are perhaps a little irrational—we will not gain any consolation from knowing exactly where his remains are," she said. "We would like to leave him there." She went on, "A great deal has been said about all of this; it is said that we don't want to stir up history. This is an infamy! As a family, we have done everything in our power for the history to be known."

Laura's tone turned sarcastic. "But no, it seems it is conservative to *not* open a tomb, and progressive to open it. They have even said we are homophobes. This is defamation, just plain crazy. It's not *that*. It's that there is a prurient interest in this search for Federico García Lorca. And it is logical; he was a symbol. But we want him to be respected. For us, the prospect of exposing further the degrading circumstances in which he was murdered is very disagreeable. To violate him further would be, for some—very unpleasant." Laura wept.

After she had composed herself, she said, "We don't want this to become a spectacle. But it is very difficult to imagine that the bones and skull of Federico García Lorca will not end up on YouTube."

Laura remarked that those whose relatives happened to be buried with Lorca seemed much more interested in exhuming them than were other victims' families. "Isn't it strange?" she said. "The question is, Why do people want to dig him up? Is it that they want the relic, the bones of the saint? Because it adds nothing to history."

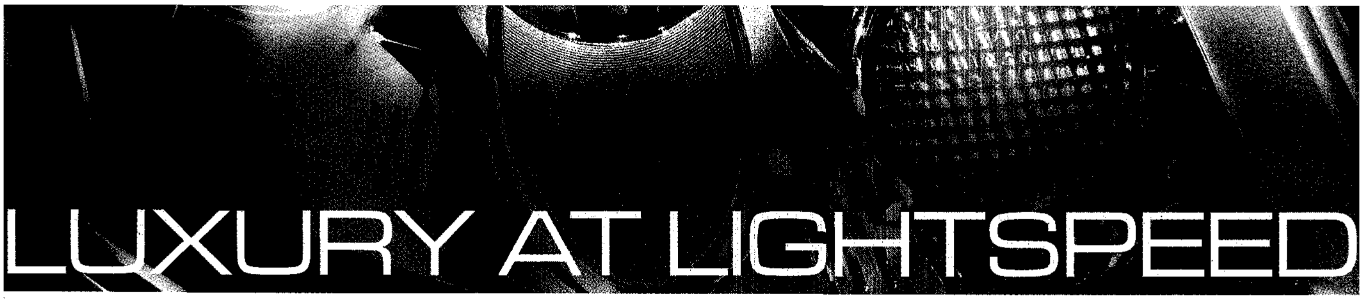
"But why," I insisted, "leave him in the ditch where his killers dumped him?"

"What *ditch*?" Laura retorted. "It's a sacred place. They're all in good company there." ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

From the Times.

> History was on the march well before Mr. Obama boarded his plane, and his trip was perfectly timed to reap the whirlwind.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THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE SECRET HISTORY

Can Leon Panetta move the C.I.A. forward without confronting its past?

BY JANE MAYER

The Central Intelligence Agency typically fights distant enemies, but on May 21st its leaders were preoccupied with a local opponent. A few miles from the agency's headquarters, which are in Langley, Virginia, former Vice-President Dick Cheney delivered an extraordinary attack on the Obama Administration's emerging national-security policies. Cheney, speaking at the American Enterprise Institute, accused the new Administration of making "the American people less safe" by banning brutal C.I.A. interrogations of terrorism suspects that had been sanctioned by the Bush Administration. Ruling out such interrogations "is unwise in the extreme," Cheney charged. "It is recklessness cloaked in righteousness."

Leon Panetta, the C.I.A.'s new director—and the man who bears much of the responsibility for keeping the country safe—learned the details of Cheney's speech when he arrived in his office, on the seventh floor of the agency's headquarters. An hour earlier, he had been standing at the side of President Barack Obama, who was giving a speech at the National Archives, in which he argued that America could "fight terrorism while abiding by the rule of law." In January, the Obama Administration banned the "enhanced" techniques that the Bush Administration had approved for the agency, including waterboarding and depriving prisoners of sleep for up to eleven days. Panetta, pouring a cup of coffee, responded to Cheney's speech with surprising candor. "I think he smells some blood in the water on the national-security issue," he told me. "It's almost, a little bit, gallows politics. When you read behind it, it's almost as if he's wishing that this country would be attacked again, in order to make his point. I think that's dangerous politics."

Panetta was also absorbing criticism from the left. The day before, a group of progressive human-rights advocates had been given an off-the-record briefing with Obama, where they discussed his plans for handling terrorism suspects; some of the advocates were enraged at what they saw as a tacit continuation of the Bush approach. According to a participant, Obama warned the group that such comparisons were "not helpful." Nevertheless, Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, who also attended the briefing, went on to denounce the Administration for considering "preventive detention"—incarcerating certain terror suspects indefinitely, without trial. Obama's position, Roth said, "mimics the Bush Administration's abusive approach."

Since January, the C.I.A. has become the focus of almost daily struggle, as Obama attempts to restore the rule of law in America's fight against terrorism without sacrificing safety or losing the support of conservative Democratic and independent voters. So far, he has insisted on trying to recalibrate the agency's policies without investigating past mistakes or holding anyone responsible for them. Caught in the middle is Panetta, who is seventy years old and has virtually no experience in the intelligence field. Indeed, his credentials for running the world's foremost spy agency are so unlikely that when John Podesta, the head of Obama's transition team, asked him to take the job he responded, "Are you sure?" Podesta assured Panetta that his outsider status was actually an advantage: "He said, 'You don't carry the scars of the past eight years. Besides, the President wants somebody who will talk straight to him on these issues.'"

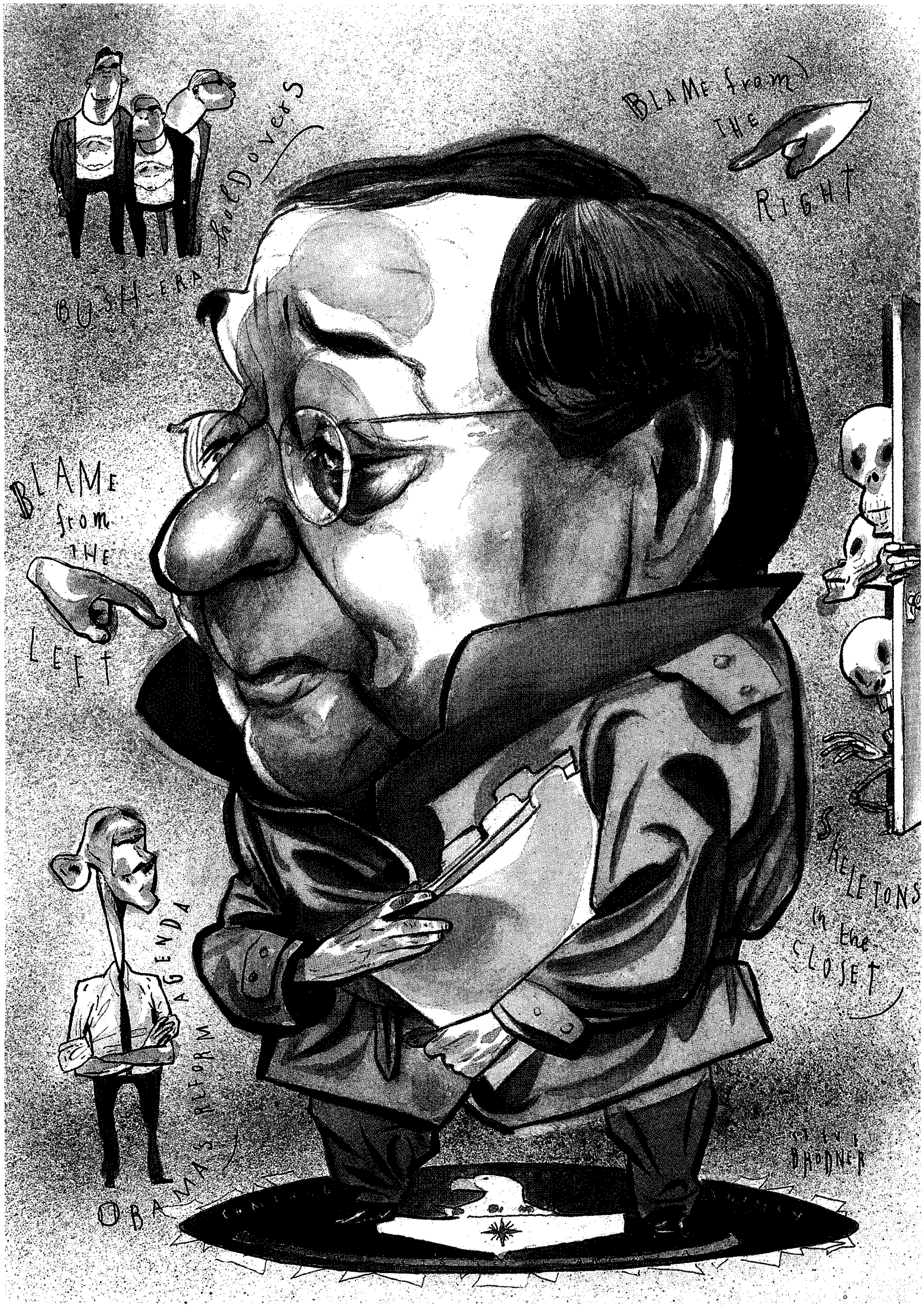
Although Panetta served briefly in the military, half a century ago, his reputation has been built almost entirely on his mastery of domestic policy. For sixteen years, he was a Democratic congressman from his home town, Monterey, California. In 1989, he became the chairman of the House Budget Committee, making him a natural choice as President Bill Clinton's first budget director. In 1994, he became Clinton's chief of staff.

Panetta, the son of Italian immigrants, grew up washing dishes in his parents' restaurant. He is disarmingly forthright, with an easy laugh; he is also a stern disciplinarian and a workaholic. Colleagues say that Panetta, who attends Mass regularly, can be principled to the point of rigidity. It was partly Panetta's rectitude that got him the C.I.A. job. During the Bush years, he decried the country's loss of moral authority; in a blunt essay for *Washington Monthly* last year, he declared that Americans had been transformed "from champions of human dignity and individual rights into a nation of armchair torturers." He concluded, "We either believe in the dignity of the individual, the rule of law, and the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment, or we don't. There is no middle ground."

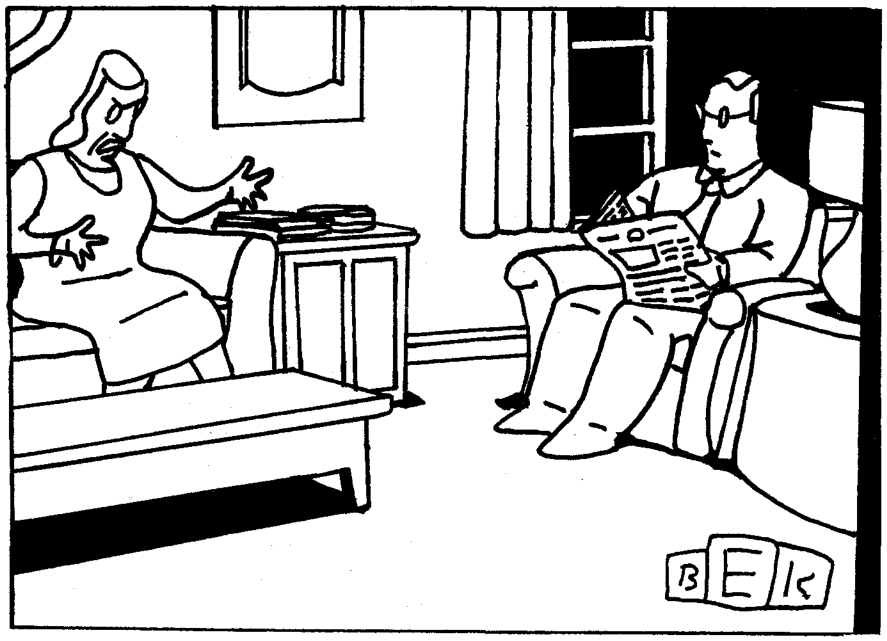
Panetta's impassioned essay unexpectedly became an asset during the Obama transition, after John Brennan—the initial candidate for C.I.A. director—was pressured to withdraw. Critics accused Brennan, who had been a top agency official during the Bush years, of complicity with the torture program. (A friend of Brennan's from his C.I.A. days complained to me, "After a few Cheeto-eating people in the basement working in their underwear who write blogs voiced objections to Brennan, the Obama Administration pulled his name at the first sign of smoke, and then ruled out a whole class of people: anyone who had been at the agency during the past ten years couldn't pass the blogger test.")

Panetta had one other strong qualification: he was close to Rahm Emanuel, the new chief of staff. During the Clinton Administration, Emanuel, serving as the White House political director, was suspected by former First Lady Hillary Clinton and others of leaking

STEVE BRODNER


BUSH-ERA holdovers
BLAME from the RIGHT
BLAME from THE LEFT
SKELETONS in the CLOSET
OBAMA'S REFORM AGENDA
STEVE BRODNER

Panetta has no C.I.A. experience, but, an ex-officer says, it's not "a bad thing to have a powerful guy with access to the President."



"For God's sake, have some populist rage."

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information, and was very nearly fired. Emanuel entered what he calls his "wilderness period." When Panetta became chief of staff, however, he reinstated Emanuel as a top aide. "I thought he had a lot of street smarts and good political sense," Panetta told me.

In 1994, Panetta discovered, to his dismay, that the President had quietly turned to Dick Morris, a political consultant with a dubious ethical reputation. Harold Ickes, a former White House aide, recalls Panetta walking the halls late one night and saying that he needed a shower after attending a meeting with Morris. Later, a tabloid newspaper reported that Morris had been meeting with a prostitute in a nearby Washington hotel. In 1997, Panetta left the White House, by mutual agreement; he and his wife, Sylvia, founded the nonpartisan Panetta Institute for Public Policy, in Northern California. In January, 1998, it was revealed that Clinton had conducted an extramarital affair with Monica Lewinsky—Panetta's former intern. An associate described Panetta then as "very disappointed in Bill Clinton, because of Monica Lewinsky. He saw him as a man with no personal discipline."

Eleven years later, Barack Obama called Panetta for advice on who might make a good chief of staff. Panetta recommended Emanuel, telling him that "Rahm knows the Hill, he certainly knows the White House, and he's got the tough side" necessary for the job. In January, Emanuel recommended Panetta for the C.I.A. post. Emanuel said of Panetta, "Leon has great judgment, a great compass. He's a great manager, and he's trusted by both parties." (Panetta was a Republican until 1971.) Some former C.I.A. officers, such as Tyler Drumheller, who retired in 2005 as the head of clandestine operations in Europe, welcome the choice. "It's not such a bad thing to have a powerful guy with access to the President," he told me. Panetta, he predicted, "will restore the integrity of the intelligence process. After what we've been through on Iraq and torture allegations, that's a big deal."

Michael Waldman, who was President Clinton's chief speechwriter, and who now runs the Brennan Center for Justice, at the New York University School of Law, describes Panetta as "one of the more honorable, decent, and principled people in government," but considers it "amazing that he was such an outspoken critic" of the agency. Given Panetta's reputation for integrity, and the C.I.A.'s central role in the interrogations scandal, Waldman wondered, "can he ride the tiger without being eaten?" He added, "An agency like that can turn on a director. That's the challenge: he's got to both lead it and reform it."

The record of outsiders taking over the C.I.A. is mixed. John McCone, a California shipping magnate who ran the agency in the Kennedy and Johnson years, is often cited as being among the most successful directors; having been trained as a mechanical engineer, he was skilled at assessing threats posed by both conventional and nuclear weapons. But other outsiders have been met with intense hostility. James Schlesinger was named C.I.A. director by President Richard Nixon after heading the Atomic Energy Commission. Given instructions to "get rid of the clowns," Schlesinger dismissed or forced into retirement more than five hundred analysts and a thousand clandestine officers. He faced death threats, and his tenure lasted six months. In 1995, President Clinton appointed John Deutch, who had previously served at the Pentagon. Deutch tried to improve the oversight of clandestine operatives after evidence surfaced that an agent in Guatemala had covered up two murders. Deutch was reviled by many operatives, and he left the agency after eighteen months. Eventually, he was accused of mishandling classified documents and stripped of his security clearance. "You pick on the C.I.A. at your own peril," Michael Waldman says.

Nevertheless, many critics believe that the agency must reckon with the legacy of the Bush era. In the past few years, irrefutable evidence has emerged that after 9/11 the agency lost its moral bearings. A confidential Red Cross report has come into public view, along with formerly classified government documents, leaving no doubt that the agency subjected scores of terror suspects to prolonged physical and psychological cruelty. Officers shackled prisoners for weeks in contorted positions; chained them to the ceiling wearing only diapers; exploited their phobias; propelled them head first into walls. At least three prisoners died.

Torture is a felony, and is sometimes treated as a capital crime. The Convention Against Torture, which America ratified in 1994, requires a government to prosecute all acts of torture; failure to do so is considered a breach of international law. The issue of torture assumed symbolic importance during the 2008 campaign, and when Obama took office many of his liberal supporters expected him to hold the perpetrators of abuse accountable. Democratic leaders in Congress pushed particularly hard for action. Senator Carl Levin, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, had investigated the military's role in detention and interrogation abuse but was kept by his committee's limited jurisdiction from investigating the C.I.A.; he urged the new Attorney General, Eric Holder, to open an inquiry, saying, "There needs to be an accounting of torture in this country." Senator Patrick Leahy, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, argued for the creation of an independent "truth commission," which could grant immunity to witnesses—thus helping to insulate the Obama Administration from charges that it was exploiting the torture issue for partisan gain.

The C.I.A.'s role in providing misleading intelligence about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has also provoked calls for reform. Senator Dianne Feinstein, the new chairman of the Intelligence Committee, told me, "There's no vote that I regret more than the vote to authorize war with Iraq"; her vote was based on intelligence that she describes as "flat wrong." Feinstein went on, "I am absolutely determined to reform the process of gathering and analyzing intelligence."

As soon as Obama took office, he overturned most aspects of the Bush Administration's interrogation policy. He issued an executive order banning inhumane treatment of prisoners by any government officials, and one closing the C.I.A.'s network of secret "black site" prisons, which stretched from Poland to Thailand. He also vowed to close the military prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where fourteen former C.I.A. prisoners are being held. But Obama's message has been uncharacteristically muddled on the question of accountability. He has said that Attorney General Holder should be the one to decide whether to take criminal action; he has also said that he would support further congressional investigation, as long as it was done in a bipartisan fashion. At the same time, he has signalled that he has no appetite for "looking backwards," and in late April, during a private White House meeting with congressional leaders, he rejected the idea of an outside truth commission. In the meantime, Republicans have seized the political initiative, expressing grave concern about the plans to close Guantánamo and transfer the prisoners to U.S. facilities.

Tim Weiner, the author of "Legacy of Ashes," a recent history of the C.I.A., says that Panetta is facing a series of "unappetizing choices." Weiner believes that the country is in a period similar to the Watergate era, when a series of disturbing state secrets—such as the existence of the Phoenix Program, a C.I.A.-supported initiative, in which the South Vietnamese were alleged to have tortured civilians—spilled out. Speaking of Panetta, he said, "It can't be comfortable for a man who said, 'This is un-American,' to be put in the position of saying, 'Well, we hold no one accountable.'"

Panetta, whose conversation with me at C.I.A. headquarters was his first lengthy interview on the topic of abusive interrogations, said that when he took over the agency he "wanted to be damn sure" that there was nobody on the payroll who should be prosecuted for torture or related crimes. He asked John Helgerson, then the C.I.A.'s inspector general, to conduct a review. In theory, the inspector general is politically independent, and therefore able to render unbiased judgments. In 2004, Helgerson had written a classified report on the C.I.A.'s secret detention-and-interrogation program, in which he questioned both the legality and the effectiveness of the agency's brutally coercive techniques. Panetta cited Helgerson's "credibility" as a reason to trust his assessment. According to Panetta, Helgerson, who is not a lawyer, assured him that no officer still at the agency had engaged in actions that went beyond the legal boundaries as they were understood during the Bush years. Helgerson, who retired from the agency in May, says he told Panetta only that he was not aware of any cases that merited prosecution, though "continuing work was being done."

Panetta told me, "I'm going to give people the benefit of the doubt. . . . If they do the job that they're paid to do, I can't ask for a hell of a lot more." His words echo those of President Obama, who on April 16th promised immunity from prosecution to any C.I.A. officer who relied on the advice of legal counsel during the Bush years. Jeffrey H. Smith, a former general counsel to the C.I.A., points out that this is a low standard, given that "what the Justice Department approved was outrageous." For example, for more than a century the U.S. had prosecuted waterboarding as a serious crime, and a ten-year prison sentence was issued as recently as 1983. Indeed, the memos authorizing interrogators to torment prisoners clashed so glaringly with international and U.S. law that some of them were later withdrawn by lawyers in Bush's own Justice Department.

Smith, who has advised Obama informally on how to handle the C.I.A.'s legacy of abuse, thinks that prosecutions are not politically viable at this point, and would in any case be unfair to officers who thought they were adhering to the law. And many Republicans, from Newt Gingrich to John McCain, have argued that pressing charges against government officials would threaten morale and inhibit risk-taking at a time when the agency faces wars on two fronts and a continuing threat from Al Qaeda. The Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe disagrees. "It's hard not to do *something* to those who performed the act," he says. "It's not beyond the pale to imagine that even people armed with legal opinions might be held legally responsible for violating the criminal law in the area of torture."

Panetta told me, "Frankly, I didn't support these methods that were used, or the legal justification for why they did it. . . . I also believed if I were to take this job it was about dealing with the threats that are out there, and trying to really bring the C.I.A. into a new chapter." He said that once he felt confident that there was no criminal liability inside the agency he "didn't want to spend a lot of time dealing with the past and what mistakes were made."

It turns out, however, that Panetta initially supported the creation of a truth commission. "I'm not big on commissions," Panetta told me. "On the other hand, I could see that it might make some sense, frankly, to appoint a high-level commission, with somebody like Sandra Day O’Connor, Lee Hamilton—people like that.” The appeal was that Obama could delegate to others the legal problems stemming from Bush Administration actions, allowing him to focus on his ambitious political agenda. “In the discussion phase”—early in the spring, before Obama decided the issue—“I was for it,” Panetta said. “Because every time a question came up, you could basically say, ‘The commission, hopefully, is looking at this.’” But by late April Obama had vetoed the idea, fearing that it would look vindictive and, possibly, inflame his predecessor. “It was the President who basically said, ‘If I do this, it will look like I’m trying to go after Cheney and Bush,’” Panetta said. “He just didn’t think it made sense. And then everybody kind of backed away from it.”

Ken Gude, an associate director at the Center for American Progress, who specializes in national-security issues, and who has close ties to the White House, believes that Obama’s instinct, like Panetta’s, was to set up a truth commission of some sort. “I think the political staff walked it back,” he says. “They said it would be a distraction.” Obama’s political advisers dread any issue that could trigger a culture war and diminish his support among independent voters. They also see little advantage in picking a fight with the C.I.A. But the decision to discourage an accountability process, Gude says, has backfired. The Administration has lost control of the story, as revelations about C.I.A. misdeeds have continued to emerge through lawsuits and the press. “It’s now become the distraction they wanted to avoid,” Gude says. “The White House briefings have been dominated by questions about releasing documents and photos.” It’s understandable, he says, that Obama wouldn’t want to spend his energy on Bush’s mistakes. But, he warns, “they can’t leave the impression that they’re trying to cover it up.”

Panetta may not have scars from the past eight years, but he is surrounded by people who do. Some of his closest advisers have connections to the torture program. Panetta brought only one person with him to the agency: Jeremy Bash, the well-regarded former chief counsel to the House Intelligence Committee, who now serves as his chief of staff. Phil Trounstine, a California-based political consultant and analyst who has known Panetta for years, says of him, “Here’s a guy who has been very critical of the Bush world view, who has to enforce a new set of guidelines and policies by leading the same agency and the same people as in the past.”

Several of Panetta’s top deputies worked closely with George Tenet, the agency’s director from 1997 until 2004. Under Tenet, the C.I.A. took the lead role in fighting terrorism, and its officers became the jailers, and sometimes the tormentors, of many U.S.-held detainees. Tenet, who is now a managing director of the investment bank Allen & Company, has all but disappeared from public sight in Washington. He recently cancelled an appearance scheduled at the Panetta Institute this month. (“George has not wanted to do stuff in front of a camera,” Panetta noted.) But in his 2007 memoir, “At the Center of the Storm,” Tenet defended the use of “enhanced” interrogation techniques on terror suspects, claiming that the information they elicited had prevented other attacks and saved American lives. (He also assured President Bush that the case for going to war in Iraq was “a slam dunk.”) But a former senior agency official who worked with many of Tenet’s top team members says, “These people carried out this policy . . . but they’ll muddy the waters by explaining why what they did was O.K. They will say that ‘Bush was bad’ but they weren’t. A lot of it is just to protect their own positions. It’s amazing to me that all these Tenet people survived!”

Behind Panetta’s desk—next to a framed, tattered American flag that was rescued from the ruins of the World Trade Center—is a door leading to the office of Stephen Kappes, whom Panetta has kept on as the agency’s second-in-command. Kappes, a former U.S. marine, is widely admired within the agency, in particular for his role in persuading the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to abandon his nuclear-weapons program, in 2003. “Kappes is the case officer’s case officer,” John Radsan, who was a lawyer at the C.I.A. during President Bush’s first term, says. Intense, serious, and fluent in Russian and Farsi, Kappes has served as a station chief in Moscow, New Delhi, and Frankfurt, and has supervised many clandestine operations. In April, President Obama paid a visit to C.I.A. headquarters and singled out Kappes as the wise “graybeard” in the building. Senator Feinstein insisted to Obama Administration officials privately that Kappes continue as deputy director; it was a condition of her support for Panetta, whose lack of experience in covert operations she questioned.

During the first term of the Bush Administration, Kappes was a top official in the Directorate of Operations. This group oversaw the agency’s Counterterrorist Center, which, in turn, managed the secret detention-and-interrogation program. Few doubt that he was aware that the C.I.A. was engaging in brutality. One former officer recalls that Kappes voiced qualms, warning that the program amounted to “torture.” According to the former officer, once Kappes was overruled he went along; Kappes was “the brains” of the directorate, the former officer says. (Kappes, through a spokesman, denied having had a direct role in the interrogation program, or having called its tactics torture.) Another former C.I.A. operative says, “It would be hard to say someone so involved could be robustly objective” in advising Panetta.

Panetta says that most of the individuals who managed the secret interrogation program have since left the agency. One of the holdovers is Jonathan Fredman, who was formerly the chief counsel to the division that ran the interrogation program; he is now on temporary assignment with the director of National Intelligence. According to notes from a 2002 meeting, which were disclosed at a recent Senate hearing, Fredman advised that torture “is basically subject to perception. If the detainee dies, you’re doing it wrong.” The notes, whose accuracy Fredman has disputed, describe him saying that videotapes of interrogations would look “ugly.” Fredman’s former boss is John A. Rizzo, the C.I.A.’s acting general counsel, who was the recipient of many of the Justice Department’s torture memos. (Rizzo is scheduled to leave the agency once a replacement has been confirmed.) And the current head of the Counterterrorist Center—the officer, who is undercover, cannot be identified—ran the interrogation program for part of Bush’s second term. Several current station chiefs and division chiefs were also deeply involved in brutal interrogations, as were pilots, logistical experts, medical personnel, and others.

Meanwhile, John Brennan—the man who was considered too politically toxic for the top C.I.A. job—has become a senior official on the National Security Council. Brennan, who, as one former C.I.A. officer puts it, was once "joined to George Tenet at the hip"—he served as Tenet's chief of staff—now advises Obama on terrorism and other national-security issues. He has reportedly lobbied hard to maintain secrecy on past abuses. According to *Newsweek*, Brennan recently persuaded Panetta to join him in protesting Obama's plan to release four shocking Justice Department memos about the interrogation program. The documents, written by lawyers in the Office of Legal Counsel, showed that the C.I.A. had waterboarded one suspect at least a hundred and eighty-three times and subjected many others to harrowing mistreatment. Opponents have argued that exposing such details could spark an anti-American backlash. Panetta also argued forcefully in favor of indemnifying any C.I.A. officers whose actions, as described in the memos, might have opened them up to criminal charges.

Several well-respected former C.I.A. officials—including Fred Hitz, a former inspector general, and Paul Pillar, a former Middle East analyst—told me that they saw no harm in releasing the documents. Dennis C. Blair, the director of National Intelligence, who oversees the U.S. intelligence establishment, including the C.I.A., also supported the release of the documents, after his staff concluded that the disclosures would likely do no damage.

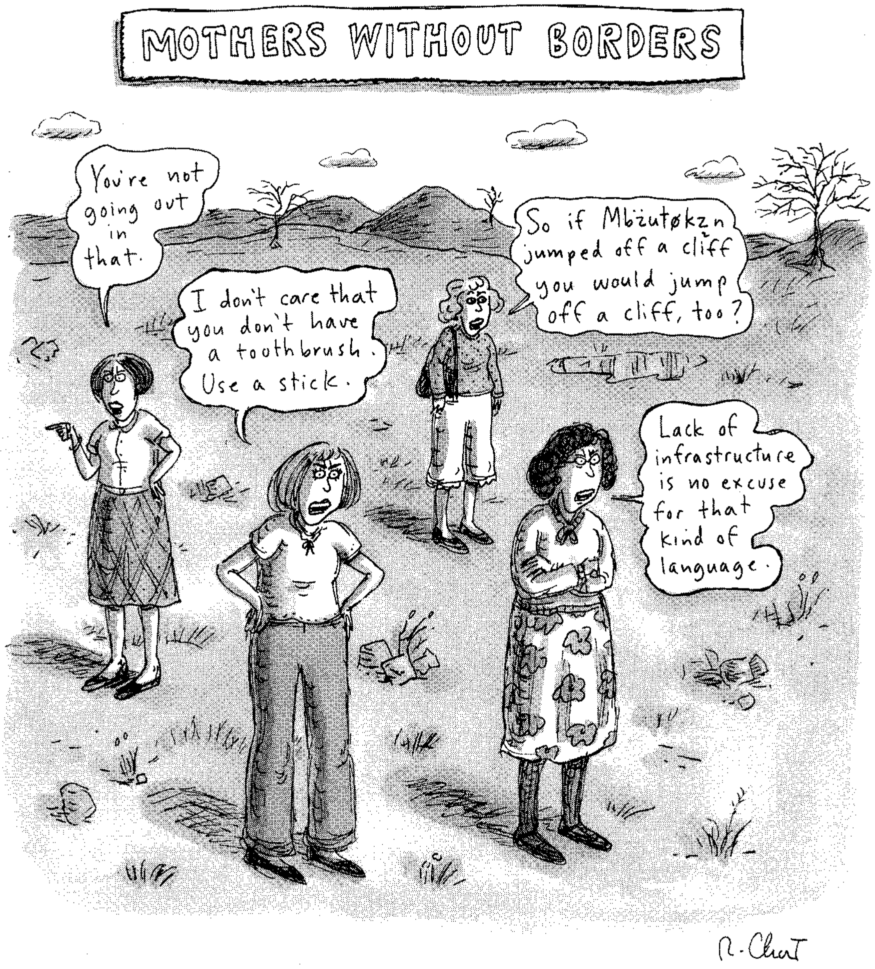
After intense consideration, and a late-night meeting in Rahm Emanuel's office, Obama rejected Panetta's arguments for secrecy, deciding that it was in the public interest to release the memos. But Obama also endorsed the notion of giving blanket amnesty to any C.I.A. officers performing authorized work.

Panetta's resistance to public disclosure seemed out of character to some longtime colleagues. "I was surprised by Leon's position on the O.L.C. memos," Phil Trounstine told me. "It's tough to maintain your principles when you're head of the C.I.A., because you need to be seen as someone that the people inside the agency want to follow." Panetta had become an advocate for secrecy so quickly, a White House official joked, that "it's like 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers.' "

Panetta's advisers may have had a personal stake in opposing transparency. Another former C.I.A. official, who knows Brennan well, noted that, if the Bush torture program were to be further investigated, "potentially, both Brennan and Kappes could have a lot to lose." Brennan's supporters have argued that he had no operational control over the interrogation program, and point out that his tenure as Tenet's chief of staff ended in March, 2001, before the Al Qaeda attacks. But he was subsequently named deputy executive director, and served in that position until March, 2003—the period when the most brutal detainee treatment occurred. In addition, Brennan often briefed President Bush about daily developments in the war on terror. Brennan has described himself as an internal critic of waterboarding—a position that friends, such as Emile Nakhleh, a former senior officer, confirm. Yet, in an interview with me two years ago, Brennan defended the use of "enhanced" interrogation techniques and extraordinary renditions, in which the C.I.A. abducted terror suspects around the globe and transported them to other countries to be jailed and interrogated; many of those countries had execrable human-rights records. He also questioned some people's definition of "torture." "I think it's torture when I have to ride in the car with my kids and they have loud rap music on," he said. Asked if "enhanced" interrogation techniques were necessary to keep America safe, he replied, "Would the U.S. be handicapped if the C.I.A. was not, in fact, able to carry out these types of detention and debriefing activities? I would say yes."

Anthony Lake, who was the national-security adviser under Clinton, said of Brennan, "I've known John a long time, and he's a really good guy. I would argue, you can't throw out the whole agency." Lake, in fact, recommended Brennan to the Obama campaign when it was looking for intelligence advisers—after consulting with their mutual friend George Tenet. America's intelligence community is an incestuous one, making it difficult for a President to break with old ways of thinking.

Indeed, a well-informed analyst with close ties to the White House says that the C.I.A. has been lobbying hard to get Obama to support some form of preventive detention for terror suspects. An agency spokesman denies this. But the analyst


MOTHERS WITHOUT BORDERS
You're not going out in that.
I don't care that you don't have a toothbrush. Use a stick.
So if Mbżutøkzn jumped off a cliff you would jump off a cliff, too?
Lack of infrastructure is no excuse for that kind of language.
R. Chast

says, "They definitely want the flexibility to hold people in some form of detention. They have been saying, 'We need deep authorities.' They've been presenting the President with nightmare scenarios."

Panetta, for his part, has been persuaded that renditions are a tool worth keeping. The rendition program began, in a more carefully monitored form, during the Clinton Administration, but in the Bush years it was transformed into what John Radsan, the former C.I.A. lawyer, called "an abomination." As many as seven detainees were misidentified and abducted by mistake; many other suspects have alleged that they were hideously tortured by foreign governments. Panetta told me, "The worst part of rendition was rendition to a black site. That will not be the case anymore. If we render someone, it will be to a country with jurisdiction over that individual." During the Bush years, however, some of the most horrific allegations of abuse were made by detainees rendered not to black sites but to Egypt, Syria, and Morocco. The Obama Administration, Panetta says, will take precautions to insure that rendered suspects are treated humanely, as the law requires. "I've talked to the State Department, and our people have to make very sure that people won't be mistreated," Panetta said. "Some places, obviously, it's more difficult to do. But we're going to have to press to make sure it doesn't happen, because it would fly in the face of everything the President has said we stand for." The Bush Administration professed to be taking similar precautions.

BEREAVEMENT

Behind his house, my father's dogs
sleep in kennels, beautiful,
he built just for them.

They do not bark.
Do they know he is dead?
They wag their tails

& head. They beg
& are fed.
Their grief is colossal

& forgetful.
Each day they wake
seeking his voice,

their names.
By dusk they seem
to unremember everything—

to them even hunger
is a game. For that, I envy.
For that, I cannot bear to watch them

pacing their cage. I try to remember
they love best confined space
to feel safe. Each day

a saint comes by to feed the pair
& I draw closer
the shades.

I've begun to think of them
as my father's other sons,
as kin. Brothers-in-paw.

The C.I.A. has apparently done nothing to penalize the officer who oversaw one of the most notorious renditions—that of a German car salesman named Khaled el-Masri. He was abducted while on a holiday in Macedonia, and flown by the agency to Afghanistan, where he was detained in a dungeon for five months without charges, before being released. From the start, the rendition team suspected that his case was one of mistaken identity. But the C.I.A. officer in charge at Langley—the agency asked that the officer's name be withheld—insisted that Masri be further interrogated. "She just looked in her crystal ball and it said that he was bad," a colleague recalls. Masri says that he was chained in a freezing cell with no bed, and given water so putrid that he could smell it across the room. He was threatened and stripped, and could hear other detainees crying all around him. After several weeks, the C.I.A. officer in charge learned that Masri's German passport was not a forgery, as was originally suspected, and that he was not the terror suspect the agency thought he was. (The names were similar.) Even so, the officer in charge refused to release him. Eventually, Masri went on a hunger strike, losing sixty pounds. Skeptics in the agency went directly over the officer's head to Tenet, who realized that his agency had been brutalizing an innocent man. Masri was released after a hundred and forty-nine days. But the officer in charge was not disciplined; in fact, a former colleague says, "she's been promoted—twice." Masri, meanwhile, has been unable to sue the U.S. government for either an apology or damages, because the courts consider the very existence of rendition a state secret—a position that the Obama Justice Department has so far supported.

No criminal charges have ever been brought against any C.I.A. officer involved in the torture program, despite the fact that at least three prisoners interrogated by agency personnel died as the result of mistreatment. In the first case, an unnamed detainee under C.I.A. supervision in Afghanistan froze to death after having been chained, naked, to a concrete floor overnight. The body was buried in an unmarked grave. In the second case, an Iraqi prisoner named Manadel al-Jamadi died on November 4, 2003, while being

My eyes each day thaw.
One day the water cuts off.
Then back on.

They are outside dogs—
which is to say, healthy
& victorious, purposeful

& one giant muscle
like the heart. Dad taught
them not to bark, to point

out their prey. To stay.
Were they there that day?
They call me

like witnesses & will not say.
I ask for their care
& their carelessness—

wish of them forgiveness.
I must give them away.
I must find for them homes,

sleep restless in his.
All night I expect they pace
as I do, each dog like an eye

roaming with the dead
beneath an unlocked lid.

—*Kevin Young*

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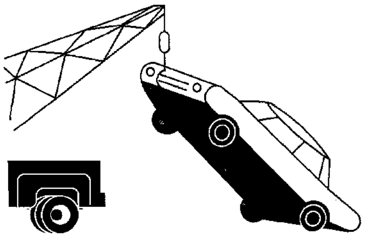
interrogated by the C.I.A. at Abu Ghraib prison, outside Baghdad. A forensic examiner found that he had essentially been crucified; he died from asphyxiation after having been hung by his arms, in a hood, and suffering broken ribs. Military pathologists classified the case a homicide. A third prisoner died after an interrogation in which a C.I.A. officer participated, though the officer evidently did not cause the death. (Several other detainees have disappeared and remain unaccounted for, according to Human Rights Watch.)

During his tenure at the C.I.A., John Helgerson, the former inspector general, forwarded the crucifixion case, along with an estimated half-dozen other incidents, to the Justice Department, for possible prosecution. But the case files have languished. An official familiar with the cases told me that the agency has deflected inquiries by the Senate Intelligence Committee seeking information about any internal disciplinary action. (Helgerson told me, "Some individuals have been disciplined. And others no longer work at the agency.")

Panetta acknowledges that there are some people still at the C.I.A. who may be tainted by the torture program. Nevertheless, he says, "I really respect the people who say we shouldn't have gotten involved in the interrogation business but we had to do our jobs. I don't think I should penalize people who were doing their duty. If you have a President who exercises bad judgment, the C.I.A. pays the price."



On June 1st, former Vice-President Cheney asserted in a speech that the C.I.A., rather than the White House, first proposed hurting prisoners during interrogations. "It was their initiative," he said. "They had a couple of cases where they thought enhanced interrogation techniques would provide information." Panetta has a different view. "There is no question in my mind," he said. "The interrogation thing, to some extent, was cast upon us, because the military walked away from it, and the F.B.I. walked away from it, and so everybody came down on the C.I.A.," he said. This is technically true, although the F.B.I. "walked away" from interrogations of terrorism suspects after its director, Bob Mueller, heard complaints from an agent, Ali Soufan, that the C.I.A.'s interrogation methods amounted to "borderline torture." John Helgerson told me that he holds the C.I.A., the Pentagon, and the White House equally responsible: "They went arm in arm into it."

Without a thorough public investigation, it's difficult to assess the truth behind such contradictory accusations. "Everyone says, 'It's over, it's known,'" Nathaniel Raymond, who works with the advocacy group Physicians for Human Rights, told me. "But what *is* known? We still don't know how many detainees were in the black sites, or who they were. We don't fully know the White House's role, or the C.I.A.'s role. We need a full accounting, especially as it relates to health professionals." The recently released Justice Department memos, he noted, contain numerous references to C.I.A. medical personnel participating in coercive interrogation sessions. "They were the designers, the legitimizers, and the implementers," Raymond said. "This is arguably the single greatest medical-ethics scandal in American history. We need answers."

Some conservatives are also calling for greater openness. Will Taft, the general counsel to the State Department in the Bush Administration, told me, "There are some twenty or thirty people whom the

"I've put everything in your name in case my creditors come after me."

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C.I.A. said it formerly held but no longer does. Those names have never been released. The government should identify all the people in the program and account for them."

The Senate Intelligence Committee recently embarked on its own, closed-door investigation of the torture program; Panetta told me that he has been assured that the committee members' work "would be about lessons learned, as opposed to going after people." So the C.I.A. is "coöperating with them, giving them whatever information they need to try to conduct their review." He says that the committee has already identified some ten million relevant documents. "It's going to take a while," he said.

The Senate investigation will, among other things, probe the question of torture's efficacy. Dick Cheney has repeatedly claimed that "enhanced" interrogations yield results. Opponents say that torture is counterproductive. Panetta is more agnostic. He told me, "The bottom line would be this: Yes, important information was gathered from these detainees. It provided information that in fact was acted upon. Was this the only way to obtain this information? I think that will always be an open question." But he is certain that "we did pay a price for using those methods."

A number of recently released documents call into question the notion that the C.I.A. played a passive role in relation to torture policy. A 2008 report by the Senate Armed Services Committee indicates that the agency hired contract psychologists who went on to design and implement specific forms of abuse—such as locking a detainee, doubled up, in a tiny, airless cage—months before August, 2002, when the Justice Department granted legal authorization with its infamous "torture memo." More troublingly, footnotes in the Office of Legal Counsel memos suggest that some C.I.A. interrogators may have egregiously exceeded the legal boundaries set down by the Justice Department and the White House—which seemingly puts them outside the legal safety zone demarcated by Obama and Panetta. In 2002, the Bush Administration authorized interrogators to re-create the ostensibly safe waterboarding techniques used in military training. But, instead of limiting the sessions to a maximum of two twenty-second bouts of controlled drowning, as prescribed in military training, the C.I.A. interrogators forced one detainee to undergo at least a hundred and eighty-three sessions, and another at least eighty-three. And, instead of using a very small amount of water, as the Justice Department stipulated, the C.I.A. interrogators subjected the detainees to "large volumes" of water. The memos quote Inspector General Helgerson's finding, in his secret 2004 report on coercive techniques, that the interrogators amplified the pain deliberately, in order to make the sensation of drowning "more poignant and convincing." Helgerson also found that the psychologists and interrogators who designed the agency's protocols—and who claimed that their judgments were based on knowledge of military standards—had "probably misrepresented" their "expertise." In addition, the C.I.A.'s Office of Medical Services found that there was "no reason to believe that applying the waterboard with the frequency and intensity with which it was used by the psychologist/interrogators . . . was either efficacious or medically safe."

In April, Panetta fired all the C.I.A.'s contract interrogators, including the former military psychologists who appear to have designed the most brutal interrogation techniques: James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen. The two men, who ran a consulting company, Mitchell, Jessen & Associates, had recommended that interrogators apply to detainees theories of "learned helplessness" that were based on experiments with abused dogs. The firm's principals reportedly billed the agency a thousand dollars a day for their services. "We saved some money in the deal, too!" Panetta said. (Remarkably, a month after Obama took office the C.I.A. had signed a fresh contract with the firm.)

According to ProPublica, the investigative reporting group, Mitchell and Jessen's firm, which in 2007 had a hundred and twenty people on its staff, recently closed its offices, in Spokane, Washington. One employee was Deuce Martinez, a former C.I.A. interrogator in the black-site program; Joseph Matarazzo, a former president of the American Psychological Association, was on the company's board. (According to Kirk Hubbard, the former head of the C.I.A.'s research and analysis division, Matarazzo served on an agency professional-standards board during the time the interrogation program was set up, but was not consulted about the interrogations.)

Lawsuits against abusive contractors remain a possibility, and any one of them could expose a line of authorizations leading directly up the chain of command at the C.I.A., and into the Bush White House. George Brent Mickum IV, a lawyer representing Abu Zubaydah, a C.I.A. prisoner who was repeatedly waterboarded, said, "I'd like to sue Mitchell and Jessen in a minute." (Mitchell was an adviser on Zubaydah's interrogation.) After Zubaydah was waterboarded, his lawyers say, his mental state deteriorated, and he has since been prescribed the antipsychotic drug Haldol.

Few activists expect lawsuits against the C.I.A. or its contractors to succeed. But John Sifton, an attorney who specializes in human-rights law, and who is part of Zubaydah's legal team, notes that there are other ways for the detainees' grievances to become public. "The act of prosecuting the high-value detainees will be the accountability process," Sifton said. "It's impossible to try these detainees without allowing them to air all the information about their torture."

Other legal actions threaten to expose yet more secrets of the C.I.A.'s torture program. A prosecutor appointed by the Justice Department, John Durham, has convened a grand jury in Washington to weigh potential criminal charges against C.I.A. officers who were involved in the destruction of ninety-two videotapes documenting the interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and other detainees. Mickum told me that he has met several times with Durham, and believes that the scope of his inquiry may have expanded to include a review of whether the C.I.A. began using brutal methods on Zubaydah before it received written authorization from the Justice Department. (This would provide an extra motive for destroying the videotapes.) Mickum said, "I got the sense he was very serious." (Durham declined to comment.) The A.C.L.U., meanwhile, is suing to get access to classified descriptions of what was on the destroyed videotapes. Last week, Panetta filed an affidavit opposing the disclosure, which he said "could be expected to result in exceptionally grave damage to the national security." Once again, he was protecting Bush-era interrogation secrets.

Pressure is also coming from abroad. In Italy, two dozen C.I.A. officers are on trial in absentia for participating in a 2003 rendition. Robert Seldon Lady, the agency's station chief in Milan at the time, can no longer travel to Italy without danger of arrest, nor can the other C.I.A. officers named in the case. Spain has opened a criminal investigation of six Bush Administration officials in connection with torture. And in London a former rendition victim is suing the British authorities. After a British judge ruled that the plaintiff, Binyam Mohammed, should be given access to C.I.A. intelligence documents that the agency shared with British authorities, the Obama Administration surprised liberals by pressuring the British government to stop the disclosures.

Several other legal challenges to the agency's interrogation program are working their way through the U.S. court system. A judge in California recently rejected the Justice Department's claims of blanket state secrecy in a case brought by five rendition victims against Jeppesen Dataplan, a subsidiary of Boeing, which provided the flight plans for the C.I.A.'s renditions. In a press conference in April, Obama indicated that he had had second thoughts about the Justice Department's assertion of blanket state secrecy in the case, but on June 12th the Administration reasserted its original claim.

Earlier this month, Philip Mudd, Obama's nominee for a top Homeland Security post, withdrew from consideration after it became clear that his Senate confirmation would turn into a fight over his previous role in the C.I.A.'s interrogation program. Rahm Emanuel, speaking of the many challenges posed by the torture scandal, told me, "It's a day-to-day—I won't say struggle—but problem. There are a lot of cases in the queue that require response. Many of them. But I've seen the President in the Situation Room, and I know he wants to move forward."

Panetta is already forging ahead on one important reform: he plans to replace the abusive interrogation program with a legally acceptable, non-coercive alternative. A task force led by the Harvard Law School professor Philip Heymann has been advising him on a proposal to create an élite U.S. government interrogation team, staffed by some of the best C.I.A., F.B.I., and military officers in the country, and drawing on the advice of social scientists, linguists, and other scholars. "What I'm pushing for is to establish a facility where we develop a team of interrogators trained in the latest techniques," Panetta said. "That's the one thing I'm worried about, frankly. There just aren't that many people who have the interrogation abilities we're going to need." Heymann describes the effort to create "the best non-coercive interrogation team in the world" as the equivalent of "a NASA-like, man-on-the-moon effort" for human-intelligence gathering. He said that members of his task force have travelled to France, England, Japan, Australia, and Israel, in order to compile comparative information on what interrogators do. "We also went to the best people in the U.S.," he added.

Panetta has many ambitions for his tenure at the agency. He spoke to me of the need for the C.I.A. to increase its foreign-language skills, and to recruit officers of more diverse backgrounds, who can more easily infiltrate hostile parts of the world. But, as Panetta sees it, the C.I.A.'s effort to "disrupt, destroy, and dismantle" Al Qaeda remains its top priority. The agency continues to acquire intelligence suggesting that Al Qaeda is planning attacks on America, he told me. "We're conducting pretty robust operations in Pakistan, and I think we're doing a good job of trying to disrupt Al Qaeda. But, clearly, that is a threat." The greatest danger, he said, is that Al Qaeda will "find other safe havens to go to," in states such as Somalia and Yemen. "Our mission is to make sure they can't find a place to hide." Finding and bringing to justice Al Qaeda's leaders—in particular, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri—"remains a focal point," Panetta said. "It's not easy, as you can imagine."

Last week, the *Times* reported on escalating friction over jurisdiction between Panetta and Dennis Blair, the National Intelligence director. "I'm surprised at the number of challenges you have to confront in this job," Panetta confided. "You're a traffic cop, in many ways." When he was the White House chief of staff, Panetta said, he could delegate the big decisions to the President. "Here, though," he said, gazing out over the C.I.A.'s serene grounds, "the decisions come to me. And a lot of them involve life and death." Sometimes, he added, all he can do is "say a lot of Hail Marys." ♦

PROFILES

REAL ROMANCE

How Nora Roberts became America's most popular novelist.

BY LAUREN COLLINS

Last summer, Sarah Wendell, an editor of the Web site Smart Bitches, Trashy Books, posed a question to her readers: "So what line of dialogue from a romance has rocked your socks to the point that, long after those socks were lost in the dryer, you still remember it?" Jane Austen got a few votes ("You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope"). There were nods to Georgette Heyer ("I remember every word you have spoken to me") and Connie Brockway ("You are my country, Desdemona. . . . My Egypt. My hot, harrowing desert and my cool, verdant Nile, infinitely lovely and unfathomable and sustaining"). The runaway winner was Nora Roberts—La Nora, the Queen, or, simply, NR. One reader nominated "Carnal Innocence," in which the plantation heir Tucker Longstreet is questioned by an F.B.I. agent about the murder of an ex-lover who turns up dead in a local pond:

Burns: I'm informed that you and the deceased had a relationship.

Tucker: What we had was sex.

Another chose "The Heart's Victory," as Lance Matthews, a race-car driver, walks in on Cynthia (Foxy) Fox taking a bath:

Foxy: I've decided to hate you.

Lance: Oh? Again?

In "Sea Swept," the first book in Roberts's Chesapeake series, the Quinns are a trio of foster kids raised as brothers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Their adoptive father, Ray, dies suddenly, leaving a younger boy, Seth DeLauter, in their care. Cam (a peripatetic speedboat racer), Phillip (an advertising executive), and Ethan (a commercial fisherman) are forced to move back into the house in which they grew up. Together, they drive to the mall to get some shoes for Seth:

Cam: You can't buy decent socks for twenty these days.

Ethan: You can if you don't have to have some fancy designer label on them. This ain't Paris.

Cam: You haven't bought decent shoes in ten years. And if you don't pull up that frigging seat, I'm going to—

Phillip: Cut it out! Cut it out right now or I swear I'm going to pull over and knock your heads together. . . . I'll dump the bodies in the mall parking lot and drive to Mexico. I'll learn how to weave mats and sell them on the beach at Cozumel. . . . I'll change my name to Raoul, and no one will know I was ever related to a bunch of fools.

Seth: Does he always talk like that?

Cam: Yeah, mostly. Sometimes he's going to be Pierre and live in a garret in Paris, but it's the same thing.

The first time she read it, Wendell wrote, she laughed so hard that she fell out of her beach chair. One reader, a court reporter, confessed that she planned to "feign sickness for the next three to six days so I can lay in bed and reread all my NR yet again."

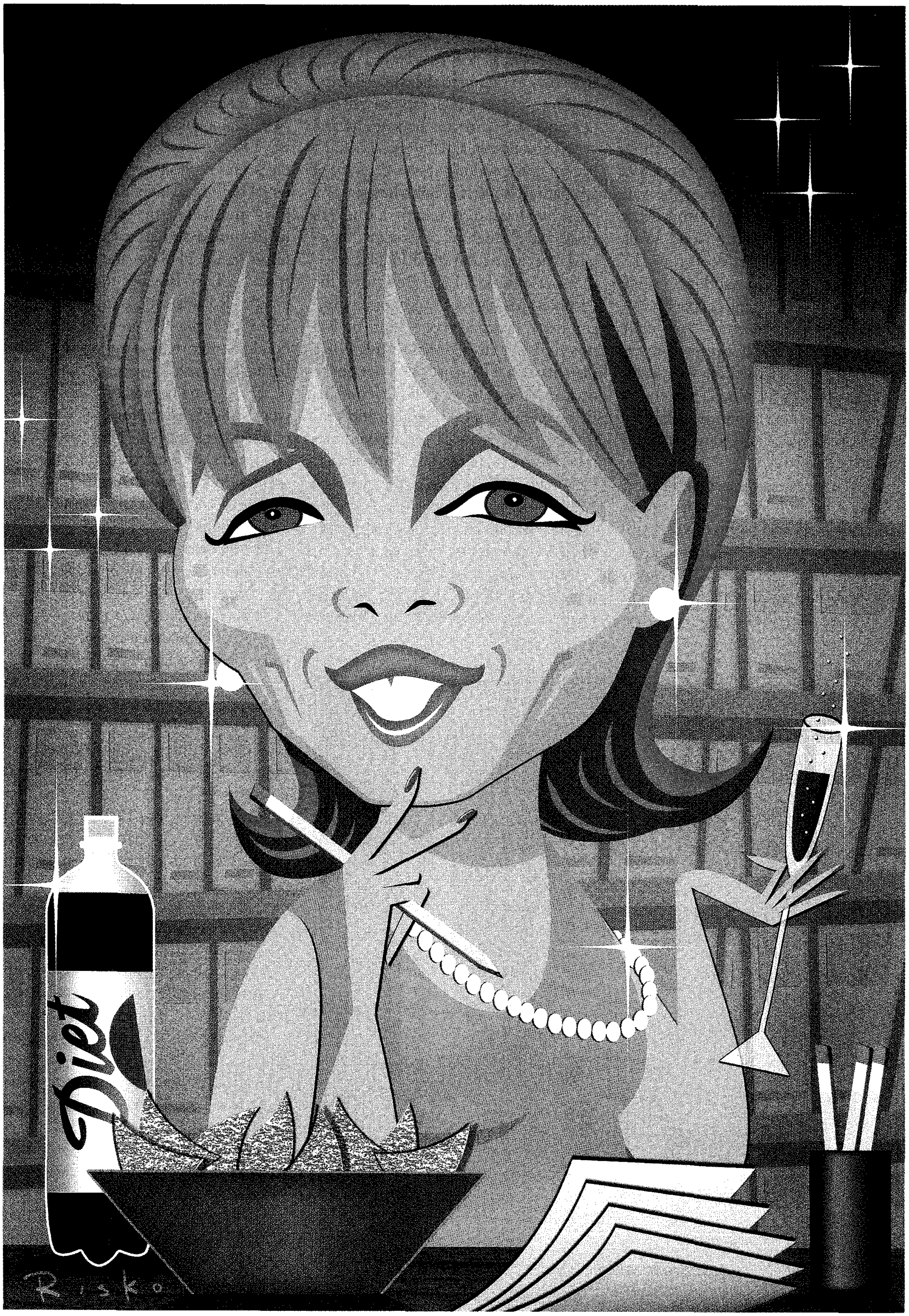
As a Quinn brother might say, it had better be one hell of a cold. Roberts, who, as J. D. Robb, also writes futuristic police procedurals, has written a hundred and eighty-two novels, in addition to short stories and novellas. In a typical year, she publishes five "new Noras": two installments of a paperback original trilogy; two J. D. Robb books; and, each summer, what her editor, Leslie Gelbman, refers to as the "big Nora"—a hardcover stand-alone romance novel. To keep track of Roberts's output, Amy Berkower, her agent, maintains a dry-erase board in her office, along with a running catalogue of factoids. Twenty-seven Nora Roberts books are sold every minute. There are enough Nora Roberts books in print to fill Giants Stadium four thousand times. Since 2004, the cover of each Roberts release has featured a monogram in the upper-right corner—"the official Nora Roberts seal guarantees that this is a new work by Nora Roberts." Her books outnumber her intimates. Only one J. D. Robb novel features a dedication—to a friend whose brother is a priest, and who promised, in exchange for the mention, to get him to grant Roberts perpetual absolution.

According to *Publishers Weekly*, Roberts wrote three of the ten best-selling mass-market paperbacks of 2008: "The Hollow," the second book of the "Sign of Seven" trilogy (three blood brothers find love and fight a demon); "High Noon," a reprint of her hardcover romance from 2007 (a hostage negotiator in Savannah meets a cute sports-bar owner while talking down a suicidal bartender); and "The Pagan Stone," the third book of her "Sign of Seven" trilogy. "The Hollow" sold 1,912,349 copies, exceeded only by "The Appeal," by John Grisham. Penguin, Roberts's publisher, shipped six hundred and thirty-seven thousand copies of last year's hardback release alone, for a total of more than eight million books in 2008. In addition, Roberts sold five and a half million copies of backlist titles, and J. D. Robb sold four and a half million books.

Roberts grosses sixty million dollars a year, *Forbes* estimated in 2004, more than Grisham or Stephen King, who is, incidentally, a Roberts admirer. "Nora Roberts is cool," King said, on the jacket blurb for "Tribute," last year's big Nora. Antoinette Ercolano, a vice-president of trade-book buying at Barnes & Noble, said recently that Roberts is the bookseller's top romance writer. (The chain's top mystery writer, after Janet Evanovich, is J. D. Robb.) Diane Pershing, the president of the Romance Writers of America, told me, on the subject of Roberts, "You know that movie 'Amadeus,' where Salieri was jealous because Mozart seemed to be taking dictation from God?"

One morning in December, Roberts was at Vesta, a pizzeria that her older son, Dan, runs with his wife in Boonsboro, Maryland. She had driven into town from nearby Keedysville, where she lives with

"I read to be entertained and to relax, and to go into another world, not because it's good for me." Roberts says.

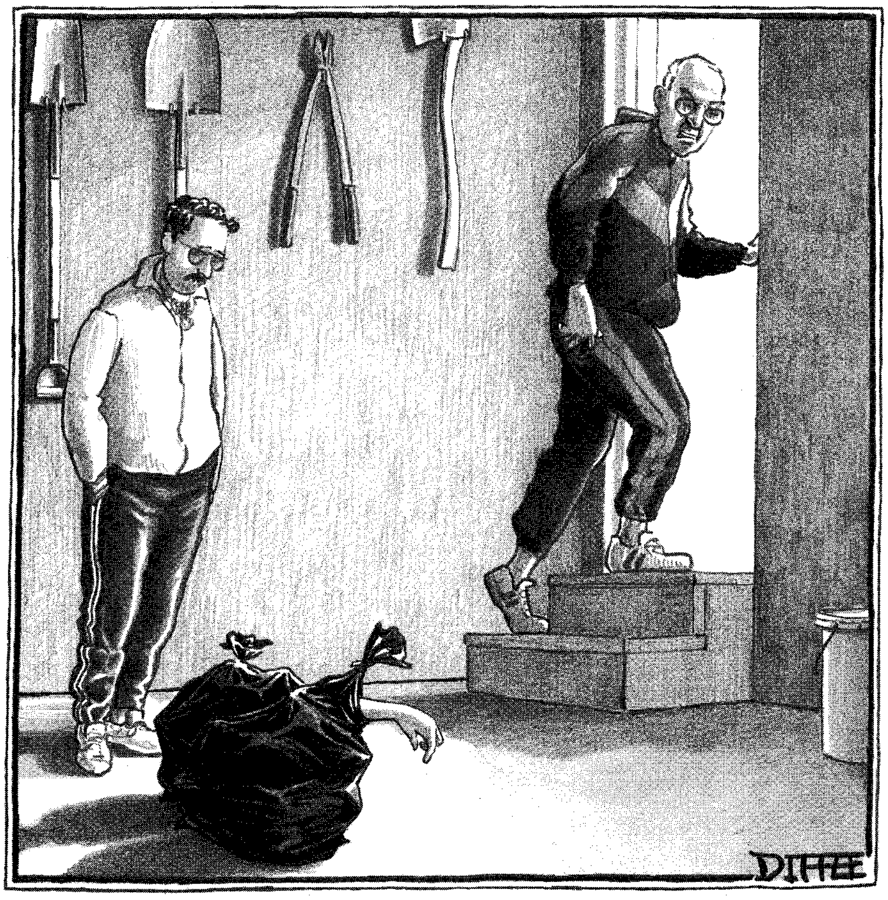


ROBERT RISKO

her husband, Bruce Wilder. Once she had taken off a pair of fleece gloves and a purple sequinned beret, she advanced a philosophy of her profession. "You know, writing's creative and all this, certainly, but you don't just wander around dreaming," she said. "That's not what you're getting paid for." Roberts scoffs at the notion of inspiration, divine or otherwise. She continued, "People go, 'Oh, you work six or eight hours a day, oh my God.' 'Well, yeah, how many hours do you work?' 'Well, yeah, but . . .' But nothing. I think this is my job. And I think people who"—she hesitated for a moment—"have more of an *artistic* bent, they're just not as productive, and their writing is probably not any better than mine at the end of the day." According to my calculations, it takes Roberts, on average, forty-five workdays to write a book.

In March, as the publishing industry withered, Harlequin, the Canadian romance house, posted profits of $18.4 million, up thirty per cent from that time last year. Romance is not a genre that suffers slow, or abstracted, authors, and Roberts, who has red hair, hooded green eyes, and a pursed half smile, is what used to be called a tough broad. Among her friends, she is known as N.F.R.—Nora Fucking Roberts. According to the writer Patricia Gaffney, "She sets high professional and personal standards for herself and the people around her, and the ones who can't live up to them don't always get a lot of sympathy." Roberts is not a hugger, or a crier. She has a dirty mouth, a smoker's voice, and a closet full of Armani. Shopping is her main form of self-indulgence—she once ordered a Land Rover over the telephone when it was "snowy and crappy" and her Z had stalled out—but you will not find her in bedroom mules or a marabou boa. Her sense of humor can be wicked. "I hope to write the first romantic suspense time-travel paranormal thriller set in Mongolia dealing with Siamese twins who tragically fall in love with the same woman who may or may not be Annie Oakley," she once joked. At Vesta, she said that she has one key commandment of writing: "Ass in the chair."

Roberts and Wilder own several businesses in Boonsboro, including Turn the Page, a bookstore that Wilder, a sweet and lanky former carpenter, manages. On the day we met, Turn the Page was hosting a Roberts signing. There were Nora T-shirts, Nora water bottles, Nora stadium cushions, and, as door prizes, some Nora audiobooks that Nora had signed. It was a Roberts reader's Lourdes. Her devotees amass collections as much as libraries. "The Official Nora Roberts Companion," published in 2003, includes a two-hundred-and-six-page concordance featuring the plotlines and cover images from "Affaire Royale" to "Witness in Death." Roberts, who is fifty-eight, once told *USA Today*, "I want to die at age one hundred and twenty at my keyboard after having great sex."



"You remember Lou."

The signing began at noon. Roberts, who had dressed up for the event, in a pumpkin-colored boiled-wool jacket and olive slacks, was seated at a card table. A woman in a police-department sweatshirt approached, holding a copy of "The Pagan Stone."

"It was awesome," she said. "My kids were like, 'Can we have breakfast?' I was like, 'No eating until I'm done!' "

Roberts took a swig from a can of Diet Pepsi. Someone passed around a plate of homemade oatmeal cookies. Listening to the give-and-take between Roberts and her fans was like eavesdropping on the collective unconscious of American women: bichons frises, migraines, Christmas shopping, marital problems.

A woman in her twenties handed Roberts a copy of "Morrigan's Cross," from 2006. "I usually read these as soon as they come out, but I have a six-month-old," she said.

An older woman chimed in, "You've got to learn to rock him and read."

"Yes, or read *to* him," Roberts said. "'Cause they really can't understand *those* parts."

"My five didn't!" the older woman said.

A girl approached carrying a souvenir tote bag. "Everybody's reading Nora," it said.

"J.D. is offended, but I'm not," Roberts said. She added, in a stage whisper, "She's a bitch, anyway."

"Does your hand hurt from all that writing?" someone asked, as Roberts, wearing a Celtic thumb ring (she also has a Celtic tattoo on her ankle), scrawled her autograph.

Roberts replied, "I'm going to treat it with alcohol internally later."

Smart-alecks make bad pupils but excellent students of human nature: Roberts is good at what she does not only because she is prolific but also because she can write zingy dialogue and portray scrappy but sincere characters. She is known for her particularly believable heroes—according to Wendell, "100% real dudes." Her female characters frequently possess an entrepreneurial streak, and they are more independent than many of their peers, and certainly their predecessors, even if some among them still have a propensity for crumpling like tissues at the sight of bodily fluids. " 'Oh. Oh my,' was all she managed before her eyes rolled back," Roberts writes, of Faith Lavelle, who, in "Carolina Moon," has agreed to help the bachelor veterinarian Wade Mooney perform an operation on an injured sheepdog. Roberts's colloquial style can be inelegant, but it deflates the more vaporous of her scenes—Wade revives Faith, and, in a few sentences, they are back to talking about "dog poop."

A self-taught writer, and an irreverent one, Roberts was not, at first, an easy sell. Amy Berkower said, "I remember Nancy"—Nancy Jackson, the editor who acquired Roberts's first novel, in 1980—"standing on her head to get Nora's books because they didn't follow the formula as strictly as others." In violation of Lubbock's Law, a genre convention stating that, for reasons of reader identification, romances should be written from only the heroine's point of view, Roberts sometimes adopted the hero's perspective. As she and her peers evolved, so did the genre, away from the so-called "fight 'em and fuck 'em" romances of the seventies toward a more contemporary, American style that portrayed increasingly, if not entirely, companionate relationships. "The classic British romances focussed on the war between the sexes," Isabel Swift, who edited Roberts for years at Harlequin, said. "With Nora, it was more of a challenge than a real battle of wills." Reading a Roberts novel is like watching a game of tennis between two very good players: it is not so much the outcome of the match but the back-and-forth between commensurate opponents that elicits the spectator's pleasure. Roberts has never depicted a male virgin—at least not that she can remember—or an abortion, but Parker Brown, the heroine of "Happy Ever After," which will come out next year, is a wedding planner, "of the Connecticut Browns," and her love interest is a mechanic.

Roberts's predominance is a feat of marketing as much as of style. At one point, Roberts had delivered a trilogy to Penguin, the installments of which were scheduled to run a year apart. "I went nuts," Berkower recalled. "They said they didn't want to overexpose Nora. And I said, 'Well, she's not Mickey Mouse yet.' " The parties compromised on a book every six months, a publishing schedule that they have adhered to since. Berkower and Roberts conceived of J. D. Robb in 1995, as a way to capitalize upon Roberts's rate of production. The effect of the ploy was not only to turn up the pace of the treadmill for the publishing industry but also to conjoin the genres of romance and crime, along with their readerships. John Lennard, a professor of literature at the University of the West Indies, wrote, in an essay on Roberts, "Roberts has in some ways done for Romance what the hyper-celebrity of Harry Potter has done for Children's Literature, making it acceptable fare for reading adults in general." To project mainstream appeal, Roberts's books typically feature her name, in big letters, and some sort of inanimate, totemic object (cattails, a lighthouse, a shrimp trawler), rather than what she has called "nursing mother" covers—"when she's falling out of her dress, and he has his mouth on her tit."

The *Times Book Review*—Roberts has spent more than seven hundred weeks on the paper's best-seller list—has reviewed her once. "They're keeping the lights on late for the promise of heaving bosoms and consciousness-altering orgasms," a reviewer wrote of "Northern Lights," a 2004 romantic thriller set in the Alaskan bush. Roberts is as uninterested in the literary establishment as she is unloved by it. "She didn't go to college, much less major in English, or take courses at the Iowa Writers' Workshop or Bread Loaf," Patricia Gaffney told me. "She's indifferent to what critics say are the rules for proper fiction writing."

Toward the end of the signing, a woman said, "Do you know, Nora, that my goal is to read every book you've ever written?"

"Well, if I've written them, you can read them," Roberts replied. "It takes me longer."

Every romance requires two elements: a love story and a happy ending. "Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded," Samuel Richardson's tale of a naïve servant girl who is courted by her employer, Mr. B., is considered by many scholars to be the first romance novel. Published in 1740, it was an instant best-seller, spawning merchandise (teacups, fans) and, as romance novels always have, highbrow derision (in Henry Fielding's "Shamela," the heroine is a wily strumpet who marries Booby for his money). Pamela Regis, a professor of English at McDaniel College, in her book "A Natural History of the Romance Novel," charts the course of the genre from Richardson to Austen to Brontë to Forster. E. M. Hull's "The Sheik"—the tale of an aristocratic Englishwoman who, travelling through the Algerian desert, is captured and raped by a libidinous chieftain, and, despite "the sickening reek of his clothes," eventually falls in love with him—was published in 1919. The "ur-romance novel of the twentieth century," according to Regis, it marked the emergence of the swashbuckling tale of high sexual adventure against an exotic backdrop as an "enormously popular" form.

By the nineteen-fifties, the English house Mills & Boon was publishing what would evolve into category romances—short, branded series books, later sold in grocery stores and at newsstands and by subscription. Led by such bodice-rippers as Kathleen E. Woodiwiss's "The Flame and the Flower" and Rosemary Rogers's "Sweet Savage Love," romance experienced a boom, in popularity and in profits, beginning in the seventies. In 1971, Harlequin bought Mills & Boon. The Romance Writers of America issued its first RITA awards in 1981. Roberts has won nineteen of them, and has been inducted into the R.W.A. Hall of Fame three times. Regis writes, "The five writers who belong in any list of canonical twentieth-century romance writers are Georgette Heyer, Mary Stewart, Janet Dailey before her self-admitted plagiarism, Jayne Ann Krentz, and Nora Roberts." Roberts is perhaps doubly canonical: Dailey, with whom Roberts was friendly, plagiarized from a number of her books, an experience that Roberts has likened to "mind rape." (Roberts sued for copyright infringement in 1997, and the case was settled out of court.)

Romance was, in a sense, user-generated content before user-generated content existed—from the outset, its publishers assumed that readers would want to write, providing tip sheets for prospective authors and accepting their manuscripts over the transom. The opening spread of Roberts's first book, "Irish Thoroughbred" (1981), featured this message from the publisher: "Dear Reader . . . *you* play an important part in our future plans for Silhouette Romances. We welcome any suggestions or comments on our books and I invite you to write to us at the address below." Early in her career, Roberts embarked on a grassroots promotion tour. At a nursing home, a man with a walker shuffled up to the meeting room and read a sign on the door. "*Nora* Roberts?" he said, disgustedly. "I thought it was *Oral* Roberts."

Loyalty means much to Roberts—Berkower has been her agent for her entire career—and it endears her greatly to the romance community that, even after her crossover success, she continued, until failing to come to terms with Harlequin, in 2005, to write category romances. For twenty-eight years, she has attended the R.W.A. convention. Every year, on a Sunday night, she and the writer Ruth Ryan Langan throw a pajama party. "We just giggle and kick off our shoes," Langan said. "I think last year, in San Francisco, we ordered popcorn and champagne." Roberts does impressions. According to the writer Mary Kay McComas, "She is a magnificent Scottish Highlander—except that they sometimes sound exactly like her Ohio River riffraff from a Western novel."

When the Internet took off, Roberts, who loathes flying, seized upon it as a way to interact with her readers. Amy Berkower recalled, "I remember I was on vacation in Costa Rica, and I ran into a guy who was the editorial director of AOL at the time. He said, 'I wish other authors were more like Nora.' And I said, 'Why?' He said, 'Well, apparently, she goes into chat rooms on, like, New Year's Eve.'"

In 1997, a group of Roberts fans—Noraholics—established a site called ADWOFF, in honor of a comment that Roberts had made on an AOL message board:

> Barb, how can one live without French fries. Not well, I say. In fact, I've been known to say a day without fries is like a day without an orgasm.

Roberts mastered viral marketing early. Sue Noyes, who runs ADWOFF, was turned on to Nora *by* Nora. "I was looking for a new author, and so I went on AOL and said, 'Convince me, people, why you think I should read Nora Roberts instead of Patricia Cornwell,'" Noyes, a grocery-store manager in Scranton, recalled. "Nora came in and said, 'Well, if you give me a try, let me know what you think.'"

ADWOFF maintains a first-generation feel. Its participants go by names like Puppy Princess of Peanut Butter and Birthdays, and Countess Coffee of the Caffeinated Canines. On one message board, "Stooooopid Questions!," readers can quiz Roberts about whatever they please: "Hi, Nora! This is really random, but do you like salmon?" (A. "Actually, salmon is my least favorite of the fishies"), "Have you ever dropped anything important or of value in the toilet?" (A. "I'm a big believer in not just keeping the seat down, but keeping the lid down for just that reason"), "Nora, in the grand scheme of things, what is better . . . a glue stick or a glue gun?" (A. "A glue stick's more portable, right?"). Roberts has been asked, at least twice, if she likes "Riverdance," and why cargo is called cargo if it's sent by ship.

Roberts's persona is nurturing—for hiccups, "Drink water out of a clear glass, watching your finger while you draw a circle around the bottom as you drink"; for an ice pack, use frozen peas—but never vulnerable. Her readers crave her attention more than she craves theirs, and the power differential, which has widened over the years, affords the occasional awkward moment. "As there always seems to be at least one photojournalist in every family, is BW . . . the one who currently takes photos at every family gathering [and] maintains them in photo or scrap books?" Oceandevotion wrote, of Bruce Wilder. "BW's usually too busy at gatherings to take too many photos. Nobody around here scrapbooks," Roberts wrote back.

Sentimentality cloaked in snappiness—whether in imitation of Roberts or by proximity to her—is the site's prevailing register. Roberts's witticisms can sometimes seem facile, as if she were reading from a needlepoint pillow. "And the day Jesse Cooke, ex-Marine, let a woman outwit him was the day they'd eat cherry Popsicles in hell," she writes, in "Montana Sky." But her fans, tellers of riddles and doers of Sudoku, value cleverness. "If every clock in the house is set to a different time, what time is it?" one reader inquired. Roberts's response: "Hopefully, it's Happy Hour Time."

When Roberts writes a book, she assembles a community piece by piece, a train-set village of her own invention. In "Tribute," Cilla McGowan, a former child star, moves from Los Angeles to the Shenandoah Valley, to renovate a farmhouse that belonged to her grandmother. Roberts narrates Cilla's seduction—by the place, and by Ford Sawyer, a graphic novelist who lives across the road—in a plainspoken but moving aria on the joys of rural living: "In this world, Cilla discovered, people ate homemade lasagna and apple cobbler, and treated a meal as food rather than a performance. And a guest or family . . . was given a plate of each covered in tinfoil to take home for leftovers. If the guest/family was driving, she was offered a single glass of wine with dinner, then plied with coffee afterward."

Roberts would have made a keen satirist, were she not without condescension, or cruelty. In "Montana Sky," she pokes fun at the pace of life on a cattle ranch: "Ham blew out smoke, watched it drift to the ceiling. Willa imagined cities being built, leveled, new stars being born, novas." She does great busybodies and wacky relations. In "Carolina Moon," Tory Bodeen, back in Progress, South Carolina, after many years, steps into the local real-estate office (downtown, near the Flower Basket, Hair Today, and Rollins

HELP!
OUR PARENTS ARE BORING US TO DEATH!

• •

Paint & Hardware) and runs into Lissy Harlowe, the most popular girl from high school. "Now, you just tell me everything you've been up to," Lissy says.

Rosie Sikes LaRue Decater Smith is the aunt of the man Tory ends up falling in love with: "She wore a wig, at least Tory assumed it was a wig, of platinum blond, a flowing floor-length dress striped like a red-and-white awning, and enough jewelry to topple a lesser woman." Rosie, a compulsive shopper, arrives at the gift shop that Tory has just opened:

> "Now what the blue hell is this thing?" She picked up a polished wooden stand with a hole in it.
>
> "It's a wine rest."
>
> "Don't that beat all? Why anybody'd want to give a decent bottle of wine time to rest is beyond me. Wrap me up two of those. Lucy Talbott!"

Roberts's characters fill up their tanks at the Qwik Mart, buy Nutter Butters and Little Debbies, and bitch about the "goddamn go-coffee from Sheetz." They eat bagels while battling the forces of evil. Their parents, and often their grandparents, are present in the narrative. Hers are not Carrie Bradshaw fantasies.

Born Eleanor Marie Robertson in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 1950, Roberts writes what she knows, in a general sense—hardworking people who would kill for their kids but who otherwise don't take themselves too seriously. Her father, Bernard, was a stagehand and projectionist who eventually opened a lighting business. Her mother, Eleanor, was a homemaker and later a partner in the business. They met as teen-agers in northeastern Washington, D.C., after Eleanor had just broken up with one of Bernard's brothers, and their relationship figures prominently in Roberts's mythology of romantic love. "My father always walked with his hands in his back pockets, and he's kind of swaggering and he says to his brother, 'Leave her alone.' My mother asked her mother if she could go out with him. And my grandmother said, 'You mean Bessie's bad Bernie?'" They were married, Roberts mentions frequently, for sixty-three years.

Roberts was the youngest of five children, and the only girl. The Robertsons were traditional Irish Catholics. (Roberts, who is interested in Wicca and other spiritual practices, calls herself "very lapsed.") Nora was expected to make her brothers' beds. Her father often took her with him to the movie theatre. "I remember this double feature—I sat all day in the theatre and it was 'Peter Pan' and 'The King and I,' " she recalled. "When they did the 'Shall We Dance?' number, I was just swept away. Later, I realized there's such restrained sexuality in that dance, but as a child I just knew there was something really important and exciting going on, besides the music." Roberts attended an all-girl parochial school until ninth grade, when a nun named Sister Alice Maureen became Mother Superior. She made participation mandatory in a game called Paul Revere, in which each girl had to carry one of her classmates on her back and run the length of the gym. "I was this bone-skinny runt, and I could not do it," Roberts recalled. "My mother finally let me go to Blair—'Boys!' "

At Montgomery Blair High School, Roberts dated a classmate named Ronald Aufdem-Brinke, whom she married upon graduation, at the age of seventeen. The couple settled in Keedysville, in an out-of-the-way ranch house in which Roberts continues to live. In 1972, Dan was born. Three years later, another son, Jason, arrived. Aufdem-Brinke worked for a sheet-metal manufacturer; Roberts was briefly a legal secretary, before quitting to stay home. She refers to those years as her "Earth Mother" period. "I baked bread, canned, sewed, macraméd, embroidered, grew vegetables," she once told an interviewer. "I was obviously looking for a creative outlet."

In February of 1979, a now legendary snowstorm hit. Roberts, trapped in the house "with a three- and a six-year-old . . . and a dwindling supply of chocolate," picked up a legal pad and scratched out her first manuscript. It featured a Spanish hero and a heroine with a sprained ankle, and was, Roberts asserted later, "simply dreadful." Roberts kept writing. In 1980, Silhouette accepted "Irish Thoroughbred," which was pretty dreadful, too ("You impudent little wench!" "You great thundering blackguard!"), but possessed flashes of the spiritedness and humor that would define her success.

In Boonsboro, which is known for its cantaloupes, Roberts is a prominent but elusive citizen. She contributes handsomely to local causes (the fire department, the library), but sometimes, she told me, does not leave her house for three weeks. In the past year, she has been more visible than usual, transforming a dilapidated historic building on the town's main square into a small boutique hotel called Inn BoonsBoro. Roberts owns buildings on three of the four corners in the middle of town, which some locals refer to as Nora Square. "We're just so proud to say we have Nora in Boonsboro," Debra Smith, the town manager, told me.

The inn, which opened earlier this year, has seven themed rooms, all dedicated to pairs of literary lovers. There is heather-scented hand lotion in the Jane and Rochester Room. The Eve and Roarke Room—named for the protagonists of the J. D. Robb books—is furnished with a mod orange chair. On the morning of February 22, 2008, as the renovation neared completion, a liquid-propane tank ignited and set fire to the inn and several adjacent buildings. By nightfall, only the original masonry remained. Within days, Roberts had announced that she would rebuild. The saga of the inn played out like something from a Nora Roberts novel about tragedy, pettiness, grace, and, ultimately, resilience in a small town. ("I was just reading about the fire in Boonsboro—Nora Roberts, Nora Roberts, Nora Roberts," an anonymous reader wrote to the Hagerstown *Herald-Mail.*) "Blue Smoke," the big Nora from 2005, contains an eerily prescient passage, in which the heroine, Reena Hale, on the day she gets her first period, watches the family pizzeria go up in flames: "She would never forget it, not for all of her life, standing with her family while Sirico's burned. . . . She could feel it inside her belly, the fire, like the cramping. The wonder and horror, the awful beauty of it, pulsed there."

"Blue Smoke" takes place in Baltimore. Roberts's readers identify not only with her settings but also with her protagonists—fundamentally kind, optimistic people who talk about cars ("You pop the clutch and drive around at ninety, you're going to be stacking up tickets like cordwood"), wear grungy clothes ("Her own Arctic-blue eyes [were] shaded by the bill of a *Rock the House* ball cap"), and, even with a serial killer on the loose, think such positive thoughts as "A friendly screen door should squeak, and it should squeal." In her choice of milieu, if nothing else, Roberts is the Raymond Carver of romance. Her characters thirst for cold beers on the porch, not Daiquiris by the pool. Occasionally, she can make you yearn for Tahiti—one of the Quinn brothers, in "Sea Swept," fantasizes about a "hot-looking C.P.A."

The idea that readers turn to romance to escape their drab, loveless lives is, in Roberts's opinion, a canard. Her view is borne out by the market: according to the R.W.A., romance generated nearly $1.4 billion in sales in 2007, more than science fiction and fantasy combined (seven hundred million dollars), mystery (six hundred and fifty million), or literary fiction (four hundred and sixty-six million). Of people who read books, one in five read a romance. The engine of the genre, according to Roberts, is not escapism but identification. "For the kind of books I write, character is key," she said. "Character is plot. Make them accessible to the reader. They may be a billionaire or they may be a half demon or they may be a gym teacher, but something about them has to relate so the reader can say, 'I understand them.' " Like campfire stories, Roberts's books rely on verve and familiarity rather than on any particular polish or originality. One of Roberts's editors once received some feedback from a romance readers' focus group: "My life is 'Moby-Dick.' I don't need to read it."

At dinner with Roberts and Wilder one night, I mentioned a scene in her novel "Birthright," in which the heroine, Callie Dunbrook, receives a coffee-table book about Pompeii from a man who may or may not be her father, who confesses to once having made the mistake of selecting an automotive accessory as an anniversary gift for his wife.

"You'll never live it down," Roberts said to Wilder, who was engrossed in a large platter of eggplant parmigiana.

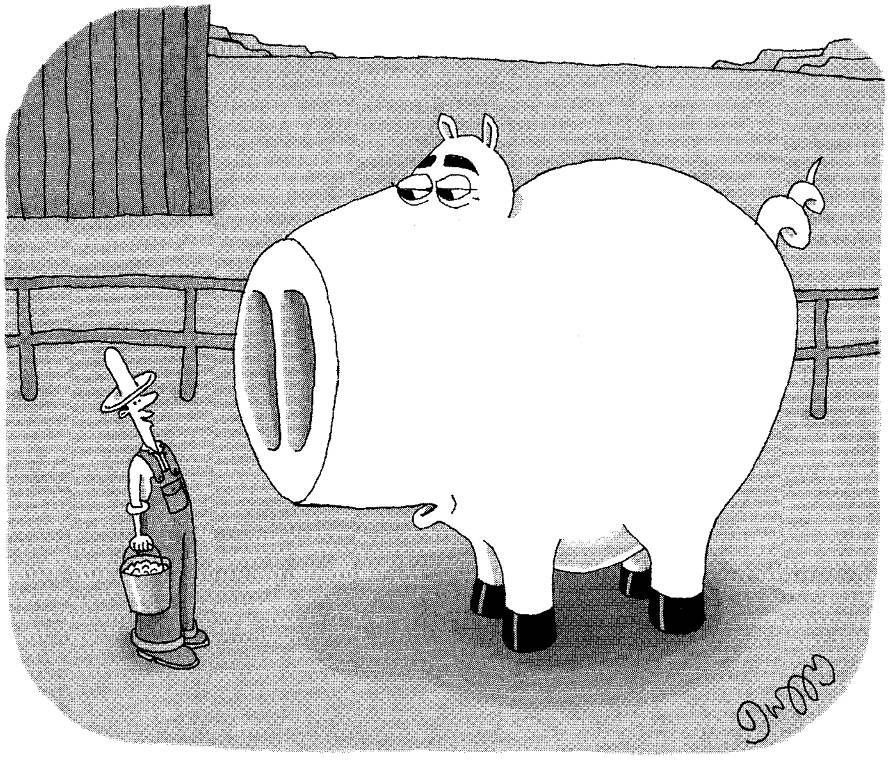
She turned to me. "He doesn't even know what I'm talking about!"

Roberts continued, "First Christmas! What did you give me our first Christmas?"

"I don't remember," Wilder replied.

"I do. Car mats."

Many romances begin with a "cute meet," in which the hero and the heroine are introduced to each other in some novel manner. Nora Roberts met Bruce Wilder in 1983, when he came to her house to build some bookshelves.



"Hungry?" "I could force something down."

Newly divorced, she was not looking for a relationship. " 'Men? I spit on men,' " Roberts recalled, of her mind-set. When Wilder called to ask her over for dinner, she was surprised. "I hadn't dated since high school, since I got married straight out," she said. "But I thought, Well, if he was an axe murderer or a serial rapist, I've been here alone with him at the house, so I'd already be dead." Wilder cooked spaghetti. His house was tidy. Roberts likes to say she married him so that she didn't have to pay for the bookshelves.

Roberts calls her house the Fortress of Solitude. Over the years, she has made additions, and it is a rambling, log-cabin-ish affair, with an indoor pool and a porch painted turquoise. The walls are decorated with postcards from Galway and with lace crocheted by Roberts's mother. A publike basement features two pinball machines, a pachinko game, and a "dirty dartboard" ("Touch with Ice," "Kiss My Ear"). In the study, near a pair of leather recliners, is a large portrait depicting Bruce and Nora as Rick and Ilsa from "Casablanca." Dan, Roberts's son, and his family live a few houses down. When he and Jason were young, and Roberts went on book tours, a set of neighbor triplets, one of whom is now Boonsboro's mail carrier, would babysit. One day in February, Roberts, explaining why she lives where she does, said, "There's a word in Irish—*comhar*—which in the vernacular of the rural West counties means a sense of community and neighbor helping neighbor." As we pulled to the end of the long gravel drive leading up to the house, a statue of Merlin stood sentry at her back door. "It's burlwood chain-saw art," Roberts said. "I saw him in California, and I had him shipped out. He's too cool."

Initially, Roberts wrote wherever she could: in the car-pool line, at the dentist's office. As her career took off, she began to establish boundaries: "Don't bother me unless it's blood or fire. And, as they grew more responsible, arterial blood and active fire." At the end of the day, she would pay the kids ten cents a page to feed paper into her Wang word processor. Now she works at home, in a third-floor office overlooking acres of oaks, poplars, and tulip trees. A mobile in the shape of a fire-breathing dragon hangs from a skylight. Her desk is covered in bobbleheads and tchotchkes: Alfred E. Neuman, Mulder and Scully, Spike from "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," a pop-up nun.

Routine is vital to Roberts. Unlike most people who come into a great deal of money, she has used hers to maintain her life, rather than to refashion it. (Her main concession to her income, besides the shopping, is to charter a private jet when she travels.) On a typical day, she gets up at around six, works out in the basement, and is sitting down at her computer by eight o'clock. She limbers up with a game of Gem Drop or Jewel Quest Solitaire, checks the blogs, and writes for six to eight hours, fuelling herself with Winston Filter 100s, Cheez-Its, and Diet Pepsi from a litre bottle. Around five o'clock each afternoon, she goes downstairs to prepare dinner. For years, people have been telling her to hire a cook. She has no assistant or research aide. "Why would you want people in your house?" she said. "Then you have to talk to them." Every January, she and Wilder go to a spa in the Pennsylvania hills. Ruth Ryan Langan and her husband usually visit in November. Langan said, "On our first night, Nora usually has pasta with red sauce and a green salad with shredded carrots."

Roberts may be the most intuitive writer since Noel (Hot Lead) Loomis, who wrote several dozen Westerns straight onto a Linotype machine he kept in his house. She doesn't keep bios on her characters. She never makes an outline, and she does most of her research on Google. Before she wrote "Montana Sky," her editor suggested that she go to Montana. "Why would I want to go to Montana?" Roberts said. To start, Roberts has said, "I'll vomit out the first draft." She typically goes through twice more and sends "the best book I can write at that time" to her editor. Roberts hates it when people ask her where she gets her ideas. "It's not like I go out, pluck them off the Idea Bush or pick up a few at the Idea Store," she has said. She told me she has never quit on a manuscript: "I will beat it. I will wrestle it to the ground. It will not defeat me." (She has, however, disowned one book: "Promise Me Tomorrow," a 1984 novel with an unhappy ending that Roberts says "was full of clichés," and is now for sale for a hundred dollars on Amazon.) The months following the discovery of Janet Dailey's plagiarism were the only time in her career that she has felt blocked. Roberts is still heated about it. "Don't push an Irishwoman into a corner," Roberts told me. "Then she's going to come out, and she's going to have your blood in her throat."

Roberts's influences are myriad and mostly popular. She assesses books and movies summarily, like an emperor deciding the fate of a gladiator. She likes "Catch-22" ("so many layers"), "The Stand" ("just a precious jewel"), Robert Parker, Baz Luhrmann's "Australia," and Larry McMurtry ("until the sad parts"). She has not seen or read "Revolutionary Road," but she dislikes it anyway ("I don't want to be brought down like that"). She is proud of her knowledge of pop culture and is impatient with eggheads. "Copy-editors? You want me to start on copy-eds?" she wrote, on a Web site. "The ones who neglect to correct lie to lay, then tell me Suellen isn't a character from Gone With the Wind, but from the TV show Dallas?" One day, as we were talking, I mentioned, guiltily, that I'd never read Proust. "I don't particularly want to," Roberts said. "I do not feel obliged in my reading. I read to be entertained and to relax, and to go into another world, not because it's good for me." She paused, nostrils flared, and said, "I don't eat broccoli, either."

Most writers have worked out the kinks in their writing by the time they are published, but in romance many writers develop on the job. Roberts's writing, by her own estimation, has improved markedly since her early novels, which featured a lot of passive constructions and thesaurus words. Compared with Nora Roberts, J. D. Robb is slightly more staccato and noirish, but Roberts says that the voices are essentially the same. In both incarnations, she is spare, catchy, and impressionistic. Her sentences are often clipped, and she has a habit of turning adjectives and nouns into verbs ("two canine forms bulleted out" the door). Her figurative language can be clever ("Dobby's face reminded Cilla of a piece of thin brown paper that had been balled tight, then carelessly smoothed out") or it can be clumsy ("They meshed like butter on popcorn, both lively and entertaining").

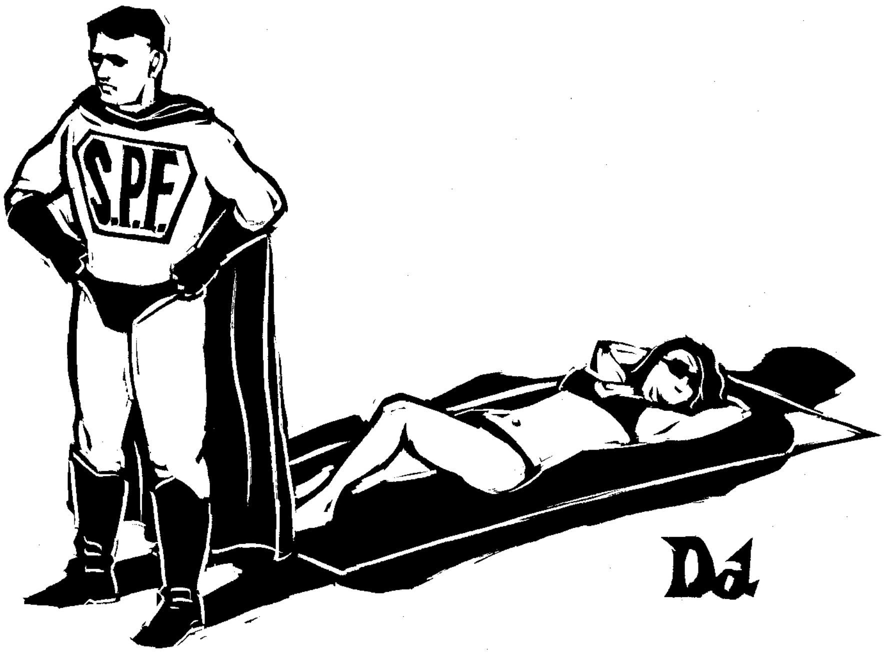
Almost everyone I spoke with praised Roberts's storytelling, her incantatory ability to engage the reader. "Storytelling" also suggests a quasi-extemporaneous quality, the privileging of the thrust of a narrative over its details, and while Roberts's narratives have momentum, they are not always painstakingly crafted. In "The Pagan Stone," she interrupts what is supposed to be a climactic and scary fight scene with a digression involving the B-52s song "Love Shack." It might be a funny set piece, with some of the body-dropping camp of the James Bond movies, if we weren't supposed to take the song seriously, as a "battle cry" that "was so in-your-face, so utterly and humanly defiant." Her plotting can be erratic. In "Tribute," Matt and Josie's son is called Sam on page 274. By page 392, his name has become Ethan. The head medical examiner's name is Morse in some of the J. D. Robb books; in others, it is Morris. To immediately justify a character's psychology, Roberts may supply him or her with a flimsy backstory. In "Glory in Death," the police psychologist Dr. Charlotte Mira says that, as a child, she was raped by her stepfather—who, in "Purity in Death," is semi-retired and living in Connecticut. "It's sort of embarrassing," Roberts told me, of her occasional bloopers. "You just feel like an idiot."

Another pitfall, when you've written almost two hundred books, is repetitiveness. "I feel like I've met Cilla in other Nora books," a reader wrote in a generally positive review of "Tribute" on ADWOFF. "I have nothing against self assured not prissy, comfy, but 'I spruce up nice' girls [but] the female characters have just been very similar." The spunky-heroine voice that Roberts favors is winning, but it can seem like a fallback. Would a twenty-four-year-old say, "I thought he waited for you at the side door every night, then walked you back at dawn because you were holding a secret canasta tournament"? At other times, her characters, grousing about "sons of bitches" and vowing to "welsh on" their enemies, seem to hail from the Nixon era.

"You cannot write with the reader over your shoulder," Roberts told me. But she is keenly attuned to the demands of the market. At Harlequin's request for a "Batman-type character," she once created a hero who could walk through walls. The producer Peter Guber has adapted a number of Roberts's books into Lifetime movies, four of which aired on Saturday nights this spring. (*New York* rated the ad campaign, a series of pastel-heavy posters that colonized the city's subways and buses, as "lowbrow" and "despicable," but the movies are Lifetime's most-watched programs this year.) "She's not a pain in the ass," Guber told me. "You have to listen to her, but, at the same time, she was completely like, 'You want to blend those two secondary characters together? Great. Not a problem.'" Roberts's readers value consistency, not experimentation or risk-taking. "Except for some of the early category romances, I really haven't found a bad Nora read," Sue Noyes, of ADWOFF, said. It would be nice if every book was Roberts's dream house, but she will build to spec.

Roberts has a riff about the sort of romance novel that was popular at the beginning of her career:

> He was often a Greek tycoon; she was often orphaned and raised by an aunt. She's on her way to a new job, working for the richest man in the free world. In the airport, she's rushing through with her battered suitcase. She runs into this man and the suitcase falls open, revealing a pitiful wardrobe—it's all neat and well-mended but sad. And he calls her a clumsy fool and helps her stuff her clothes back into the suitcase and storms off, and the next day she goes into the offices of the richest man in the free world and who should be there but the man she ran into in the airport?



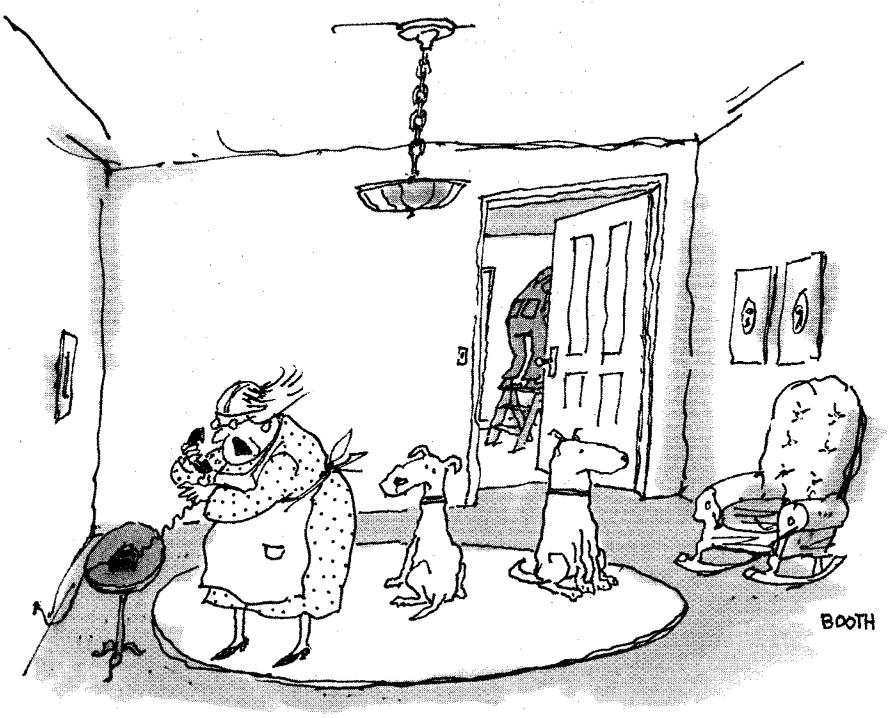
Its class and the sexual dynamics have progressed, but romance, which Roberts has said holds a "watery mirror" up to its times, is still a genre. Pamela Regis identified its eight essential elements, which Sarah Wendell and Candy Tan, in their new book "Beyond Heaving Bosoms: The Smart Bitches' Guide to Romance Novels," have condensed to four: "Boy meets girl. Holy crap, shit happens! Eventually, the boy gets the girl back. They live Happily Ever After." (In a 1981 survey, the literature professor Janice A. Radway found that the romance readers in her sample group considered the depiction of rape only slightly less objectionable than a sad ending.) Chapter 19 of "Writing a Romance Novel for Dummies" offers a list of familiar plot elements: Marriage of Convenience, Stranded with a Stranger, Runaway Bride, Woman in Jeopardy, Back from the Dead, Mistaken Identity, Secret Baby, Reunion Romance, the Dad Next Door. (Roberts's rule of thumb: "one cliché per story.") "Heroes from Germany, Scandinavia, and the former Soviet Union and its current descendant states have all proven a difficult sell," it warns. According to industry legend, a book tanked when its publisher omitted from its cover the single light that customarily shines from an upper window of a graystone castle.

Even the sexual content of romance novels is highly codified. The Arabesque Romance guidelines "strongly discourage having the characters live together as a couple," although "some story lines do allow for premarital conception, as long as the couple eventually marries." In the Steeple Hill Love Inspired line, authors should "avoid any mention of nudity." (The characters should also be North American, and they should not take "the Lord's name in vain" or use "euphemisms for curses"—"heck, darn, gosh.") The Black Lace erotic-fiction line, published in the U.K., allows for clitoral piercings but "no animals, lasting physical damage, parent/child incest or misery."

There is a kitchen-table quality to sex in romance novels which distinguishes them from pornography. Gay critics have pointed out that you could substitute "she" for every "he" in many sex scenes, and they would still work. "She smelled like the woods, he thought," Roberts writes, in "The Pagan Stone." "Autumn woods. Nothing fragile and pastel like spring, but rich and vivid, with just a hint of smoke." Probably no man has ever thought this, but it's effective stuff. In the same way that women dress for other women, romance novels stem from, and speak to, the female imagination. Fine, strapping fellows as the men are, they might not always be recognizable to their human counterparts.

In Roberts's early books, the sex could be rough and spastic. Travis Grant says to Adelia Cunnane in "Irish Thoroughbred," "You'll come to Kentucky because it suits me to have you there, and I'm accustomed to having what suits me." Roberts continues:

> His smile spread in a rapid change of mood as her head snapped up with fresh anger. His hands claimed her waist, then trailed slowly upward, resting on the sides of her firm young breasts as her anger faded into confusion. . . . Her lips parted, but she found no strength to protest against the unfamiliar intimacy. . . . She felt herself rising from the ground, and her hands went to his shoulders automatically to compensate for the loss of gravity.



"Can Hiram call you back? He's adjusting our solar panels."

Later, Adelia's hand finds its way to Travis's shoulder "of its own accord." One day, I brought up Roberts's old habit of inventing mechanical justifications for female participation in sex. "Oh, yes—'As if by its own volition, her hand stroked his cheek,' " Roberts said, smiling. "It was a learning process."

Many romance authors hate talking about their sex scenes as much as their fans look forward to reading them, but Roberts is not prickly about the subject. "Sex is important in the books because, without it, it would be like eating a rice cake instead of a cupcake," she told me. She is amused by the frequent assumption that her own life is unusually amorous. ("Did people ever ask Agatha Christie if she was homicidal?") In reality, she is a deeply pragmatic romantic. In an essay included in "The Official Nora Roberts Companion," she admitted that her idea of true passion was the kiss that Al Gore planted on Tipper during the Democratic Convention in 2000. "You go, Al," she wrote.

Still, Agatha Christie, over the years, probably picked up on a few things about forensics. I asked Roberts how far she would go in writing sex scenes. "I'm not going to write about stuff that you might read about in some erotica—you know, blood play," she said. "And I'm probably not going to do S & M. I'm not going to do any harsh sex that involves pain." Whether or not her characters use condoms depends, she said, on the circumstances: "I'm not a public-service announcement. I'm not going to screw up the mood just so I can be politically correct." She continued, "My favorite use of condoms was in 'Montana Sky,' when Tess goes to seduce Nate at his desk and he's kind of like, 'Well, you know, I'm not prepared,' and she pulls out like twenty of them, and he doesn't know whether to be flattered or afraid." When Roberts doesn't mention birth control, she said, it is an artistic omission, and the reader can assume that the characters took care of it.

The hallmark of Roberts's sex scenes is narrative continuity—the hero and the heroine sleep together, and they don't suddenly turn into wildly different people. "It's not deliberately provocative, it's not because somebody whipped out a clown with a camera and a donkey and some jello," Sarah Wendell said. Roberts's characters are less repressed now, but their forwardness can seem as artificial as their modesty used to. "I'm thinking of the movie as a vehicle for popcorn and necking," Ford Sawyer says, in "Tribute," by way of asking Cilla McGowan on a date. At their best, Roberts's sex scenes contain some of her most imaginative, least workmanlike writing. In "The Pagan Stone," she writes, "They lay flat on their backs, side by side on the bed. He felt as if he'd been kicked off a cliff, doing the tumble down through screaming air to land in a hot river."

Toward the end of the signing at Turn the Page, a woman approached Roberts. "This is for my twenty-five-year-old son, who is a major fan," she said, clutching a copy of a J. D. Robb book. "But he skips all the sex scenes. So I would like you to sign it, 'Chris: Read the sex scenes! Nora Roberts.' "

Roberts picked up her pen and asked, "Should I write, 'Your wife would appreciate it'?" ♦

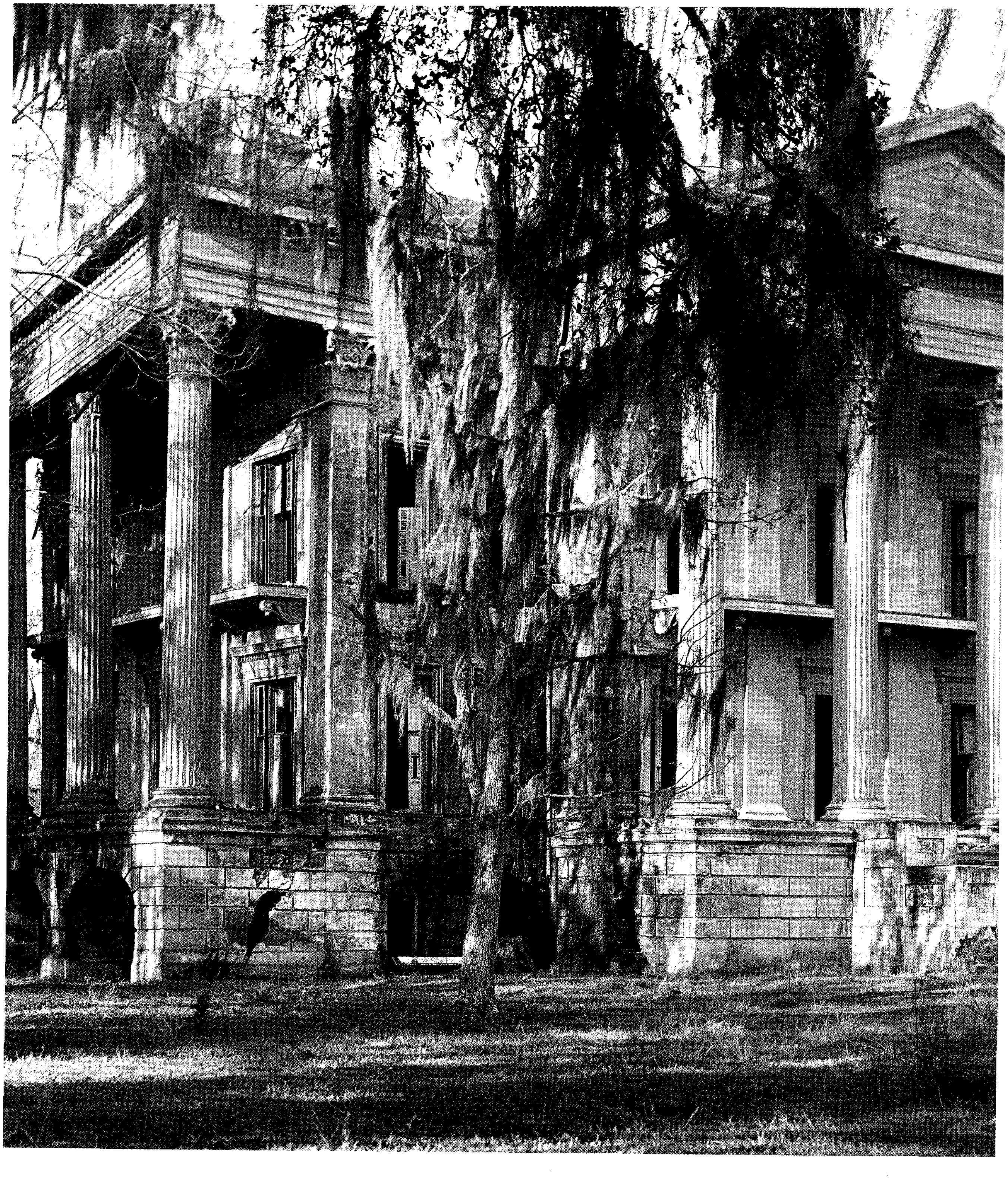
NEWYORKER.COM

Lauren Collins talks about Nora Roberts.

FICTION

IDOLS

BY TIM GAUTREAUX



Julian was living in a sooty apartment next to an iron foundry in Memphis when he received a letter announcing that his great-grandfather's estate had finally been cleared up. He stood in the doorway of his peeling duplex, his hands shaking as he read the terms. Most of the property had been sold off to satisfy liens and lawyers' fees, but the old country house and six acres remained, along with twenty-eight thousand dollars. Julian was a thin man of sixty-three, balding, a typewriter repairman who worked out of his spare bedroom and kept to himself. The one time he'd seen the grand old home was when he was eight, riding past it on a gravel road with his mother, back when she could afford a car. The mansion was surrounded on three sides by rows of cracked Doric pillars, its second-floor gallery missing many balusters, its windows patched with cardboard. Back then, it had been occupied by a glowering family of squatters who'd slouched on the porches and stared after his mother's black Ford as it crawled past the fence. For all he knew, they were still there.

He went inside, out of the late-June heat, and sat in a duct-taped recliner to reread the terms of his good fortune. The only extra money he'd ever had was a hundred-dollar win on a scratch-off ticket. Before his mother died, he'd spent two years at a tiny local college and considered himself at least wealthy in knowledge, more so than the shopkeepers and records clerks he dealt with. Normally, he disparaged people who owned large houses, yet deep in his heart he'd stored the memory of the old mansion, the only grand thing in his family's history. It had shamed him to long for the house, and now he owned it.

ELEMORE MADISON MORGAN, SR., "BELLE GROVE, WHITE CASTLE, LA" [1947]/ELEMORE MORGAN, SR. COLLECTION/OGDEN MUSEUM

The thought of inflicting pain on unlucky people bothered Julian, so instead of personally telling the impoverished family who lived in the house that they would have to leave he asked the county sheriff to evict them. He spent a month emptying his apartment of derelict Selectrics and Royal 440s, then got into his twenty-year-old Dodge and drove southeast, into the scrub-pine flats of northern Mississippi. After an hour, he left the wide state highway for a snaky blacktop road, and deep in the woods he made a left turn down a gravel lane that ran as straight as a railroad for ten miles. At one point, he came upon a five-strand run of barbed wire healed into the bodies of live oaks, and he slowed, took a breath, and stopped the car. The lawn was a weave of waist-high weeds and fallen limbs punctuated by the otherworldly pink domes of thistle blooms, and rising beyond was a mildewed temple. Patches of plaster had fallen away from the main walls, showing orange, wind-wasted brick. Julian pulled past the end of the fence, got out, and sat on the car's hood. His now dead mother, whom he'd found hard to bear, pretentious for a poor woman and full of outdated airs, had talked about this house as though it proved something about her ancestors, the Godhighs. "They were noble and powerful people," she'd told him the day they'd driven by the place. "And we have their blood." He straightened his back so that he could stare over the wiry brush at the soaring columns, the brooding eaves, and felt that he deserved this inheritance, had deserved it all his life.

He walked up the flag steps, through the unlocked door, and into a broad hall. It was an echoing house of frighteningly tall rooms that smelled of emptiness and mouse droppings. The place hadn't been painted in many decades, though the last occupants had left it relatively clean. The lightless kitchen, something added a hundred years after the place was built, contained a gassy-smelling stove and a badly chipped sink. Upstairs, four vast rooms opened off a wide hall, and a door led up to an attic crossed with naked cypress beams. Above that perched a glassed-in belvedere, unbearably hot, where he could look out over long flat plots of woods that had once been cotton fields. He imagined pickers dragging their bags slowly across the steaming landscape and understood whose labor had built the house. The roof was iron, and it looked to be sound, though storm-dented and running with rust.

After inspecting the outbuildings, he drove six dusty miles to the town of Poxley, where he bought, on time, a bed, some chairs, a couple of tables, and a dinette set. Mr. Chance Poxley, a soft, liver-spotted gentleman in a white shirt and a skinny tie, also sold him a small used refrigerator.

"You can't live without no icebox," Mr. Poxley told him. "You'll leave a can of potted meat out too long on the windowsill and think you can eat it the next day. Then you'll get to throwin' up all over the place. You'll get the sick headache." Mr. Poxley raised a blue-veined hand to his forehead.

"All right," Julian snapped. "I'll take the damned thing."

"You better," he said.

"When can you deliver my items?"

"Where you live?"

He told him and watched for his reaction.

"Law. Is that old place still standin'?"

Julian sniffed and raised his chin. "Not only is it standing, I'm going to restore it the way it was."

Mr. Poxley scratched the back of his head and squinted. "What way was it? Ain't nobody alive ever seen a drop of paint on that place."

"That'll change soon," he said, plucking his receipt from the old man's fingers.

"You ought to get you a nice little brick house on a half acre, somethin' you can keep up. I don't think you understand how much that place'll cost to fix."

"The house is part of my family's history."

Mr. Poxley seemed to think about this a moment. "Well, I hope history can keep you out of a draft."

The next day, the old man and two high-school boys delivered Julian's purchases. Upstairs, Mr. Poxley stared at the sagging bedroom ceiling. "Say, what you do for a livin'?"

"I sell and service typewriters on a business route in Memphis."

"Typewriters," Mr. Poxley repeated, as if Julian had said buggy whips or steam engines. "We threw our last one out ten years ago."

"Some places need reliable old models to fill out forms and such." Julian spread open a sheet over his new mattress. "Antique shops want rare models restored."

The old man gave the house the once-over, looked down the flaking hall, across the warped pine flooring, gazed up at the cloth-covered wires snaking along the ceiling. "For your sake, I hope typin' comes back in style."

For the next three weeks, Julian scrubbed down the rooms and galleries and thinned out the fallen limbs in the yard, the end of each day finding him tired unto sickness. He bought an electric saw and some lumber to patch the second-floor gallery, but every time he was halfway through a board a fuse would blow in the spider-haunted circuit box in the kitchen. The first time he fired up his double hot plate, the fuse-box door was open and he witnessed a cerulean flash and a rattail of smoke, the first of four fuses it took to fry one egg. He had no idea how to upgrade the wiring, and in the following days he began to eat his food cold.

Every day, he wandered through his rooms, calculating how long it would take to patch the fractured plaster, paint the blotched walls, and glaze the windows.

Julian understood that he would have to hire cheap help, a broken-down old carpenter desperate for work, or some rehabilitating wino or mental case, and the thought elevated his spirits, as if such servitude would echo the history of the place. There was an ancient kitchen house in the back yard, left over from the days when kitchens were built separate from the main houses in order to prevent fires, and the hired fellow could stay there as part of his salary. The rural living and the hard work would bring the man back to health, so the job would be like granting a favor.

He drove in to see Mr. Poxley, who, as usual, was standing at the end of his business counter, his left elbow holding him up. "What can I do for you, Mr. Typewriter Man?"

Julian frowned at the greeting. "I need to find somebody to do electrical work, simple carpentry, and painting."

Mr. Poxley's eyebrows flew up. "So do I."

Julian crossed his skinny arms. "But I can offer a place to live."

"You say you want this worker to live out there with you? What on earth for? You'll have to feed him, and he'll have lots of chances to bum money. After a few months on the place, he'll be the same as a brother-in-law."

"I want an employee, not a relative."

Mr. Poxley flapped his limp hand at him. "You want a sharecropper, son. Them days is over, gone to history."

Julian suspected that Chance Poxley had little grasp of history. He was just a desiccated old man who specialized in opinions. Still, he probably knew everyone in the county. Julian leaned in and lowered his voice. "I thought maybe I could find someone with a weakness. You know how people go out of circulation because they gamble too much or drink."

"Oh, you want a drunk sharecropper," the old man said.

"No, no. Maybe somebody just down on his luck. I could help turn him around."

"He gets drunk enough, he'll turn around plenty." Mr. Poxley slapped his leg and bent over laughing.

Julian had little patience with uneducated people and turned to walk out. He caught sight of a large corkboard tacked over with hand-printed messages, a community bulletin board. "Can I at least put up a little notice there?"

"Hep yourself." The old man limped off toward the rest room as Julian searched along the counter until he found pen and pad.

"Wanted: handyman to live on site and repair house. Ask Mr. Poxley for directions." Succinct, that was the way to be, Julian thought. He looked back toward the rest room, and added, "No drunks." He chose a black thumbtack out of a pile in an ashtray and stuck the note in the middle of the board, next to one offering a free rattlesnake to a good home.

The following Monday, Julian was outside on the lower gallery, cleaning up a geriatric Underwood on a plank table he had dragged from an outbuilding. In each room of the house, a single bulb hung from the ceiling, and the big spaces drank up all the light, so he'd begun to work outside in the morning sun, weather permitting. Around ten o'clock, he sensed movement in the periphery of his bifocals and raised his head to see a man standing in the heat-struck privet at the roadside, watching him. Julian called out, and the fellow struggled through the weeds and came up to the house. He seemed about fifty, a lean, fairly tall fellow wearing triple-seam bluejeans and a matching heavy denim shirt with the sleeves cut to the armpits. His baseball cap was of the same material, a plain-billed dome with no inscription. Julian had never seen a cap with nothing written on the front of it. "Where did you come from?" Julian asked.

"Town. I seen your note."

"What? Oh, yes." He stood up and began to look him over.

The man's yellowed eyes darted up the side of the building. "I can carpenter good. My name's Obadiah, but people call me Obie. It used to rile me when they called me that, but nowadays I just go along."

Julian studied him, looking for signals. "Can you paint?"

"Your name."

"What?"

"You ain't told me your name."

"Julian Godhigh. Right now it's Smith, but I'm going to change it to my ancestral name when I get a chance."

"Some men can change like a porch lizard switches colors," Obie said, focussing on Julian. "And some cain't." The man leaned off to the side and his skin was a cloudy blue-gray, as though he were ill in some exotic way. "I can paint a wall like a artist."

Julian smirked. "Really. Like Michelangelo?"

Obie looked away. "I reckon. Only I use a roller."

"What about electrical repairs?"

"It ain't nothing I cain't pick up. I can do one thing as good as another." He spat into the grass.

When the man turned, Julian glimpsed part of a tattoo, half a spider crawling out of the collar of his shirt. Again he saw that the skin on his arms was a smudged cyanic color, mottled in incoherent patterns, as if the flesh had been cooked all over. "Are you from around here?"

"Over in Georgia."

"Can't find work there?"

"My wife and me been havin' trouble, so I was stayin' in my cousin's travel trailer. Except now he wants to sell it."

The men walked around to the wasp-haunted kitchen house and forced open the cocked door. Julian said he would buy a cot and the man could sleep there. They would try a working relationship for a few days. The one-room building contained a table with a porcelain top and a hide-bottomed chair, both sitting under an unfrosted light bulb hanging from the ceiling on a long cord, and Obie went in and scraped dust and fallen dirt-dauber nests off the table with the side of his hand. Julian returned to the big house and brought back bread, block cheese, and lunch meat, and they came to terms.

Obie stepped over to a window. He rubbed a hand over the cloudy glass and cleared a view out toward a collapsing shed. "You ever been married?"

Julian suddenly wanted a drink, and he sat down on the single chair. "One time. It lasted about four years, and then it was time to leave."

Obie reached over his shoulder to scratch his back. "I married a religious woman and did all I could to please her. I even got saved and tithed out of what little pay I made. She run me off even though I done things for her no other man would of." Obie looked down at the floor as though contemplating a scene of great sorrow. "It was a mystery why I did it."

Julian bobbed his head. "Mine asked me to make more money, but I wanted to keep doing what I was doing. A manual typewriter and I were made for each other. I can make the big old Smith Coronas tap-dance like Fred Astaire."

Obie looked up. "You left her, or she left you?"

"I think the motions were mutual."

Obie leaned against the beaded-board wall. "You traded a woman for typewriters."

At first, Julian felt insulted, but the way Obie made the comment suggested that he understood, that he himself had made some unusual trades in his time.

"I needed to follow my talent."

Obie nodded. "I know about what a man thinks he needs." And with this he began unbuttoning his shirt. "You think you need to make a statement in life. But it don't seem like nothin' you do gets taken serious."

Julian felt a slight rush of panic as Obie opened his shirt wide to reveal a tattoo of a tailless dragon over his liver and one of a disarmed battleship across his hairless chest. Below the vessel was a dolphin jumping out of the sea, but its fin and its eyes were blurred, as though by an industrial accident. All the skin from his shoulders down to his waistband was fine-line tattoo work partially eaten away, the flesh abraded and inflamed. "It's a sight, ain't it."

"What in the world happened to you?"

"My tattoo collection. I'm gettin' it burnt off. I got my arms did already. I found a cut-rate Indian doctor to do it over in Poxley, but those treatments still cost like the devil and I'm about tapped out. It's why I got to go to work."

"What changed your mind about those things?" The colors, he noticed, were garish and the designs incongruous.

Obie stood up and looked out the door toward the big house. "Maybe I don't need 'em no more. Get a little older, you need less and less."

Julian jabbed a finger at what was left of the dolphin. "Well, there's enough work around here so you can afford to burn yourself white as toilet paper."

The night was warm and Julian turned in his damp sheets, waking briefly at gray dawn and hearing someone walking, inside and out. When he got up at eight and made coffee, Obie came to the big house's kitchen door and waited outside the screen looking in, as if knocking were beside the point.

"I got a startin' list for you."

Julian looked up from his coffee. "A list of what?"

"Of things to fix the house."

"Come in here." He took the smudged sheet where he sat at the wobbly table. "Good God, this is over a thousand dollars' worth of stuff. Where'd you get the prices?"

"I borried the phone in the hall."

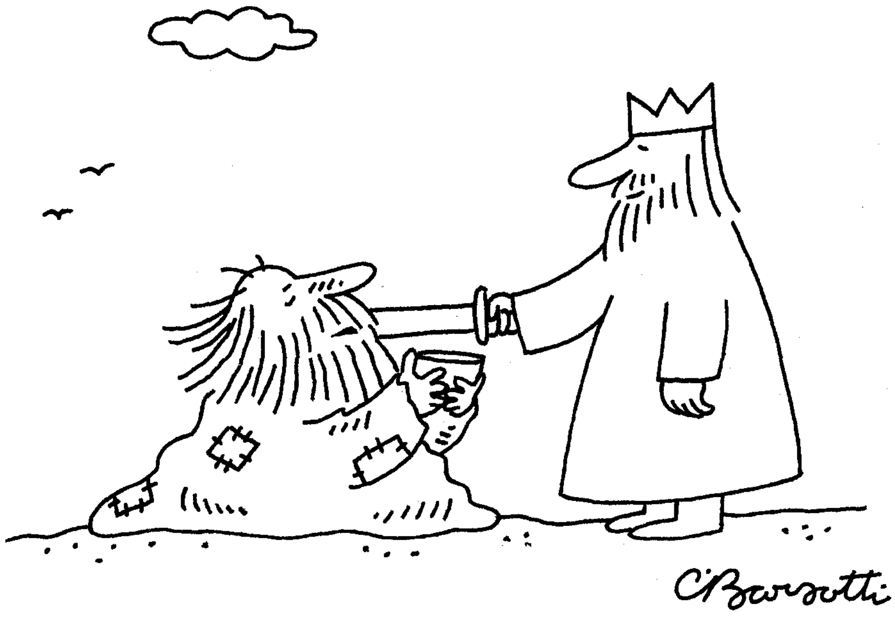
He shook his head. "That's too much."

"Delivery is free above a thousand dollars. It'll save you seven per cent, man said."

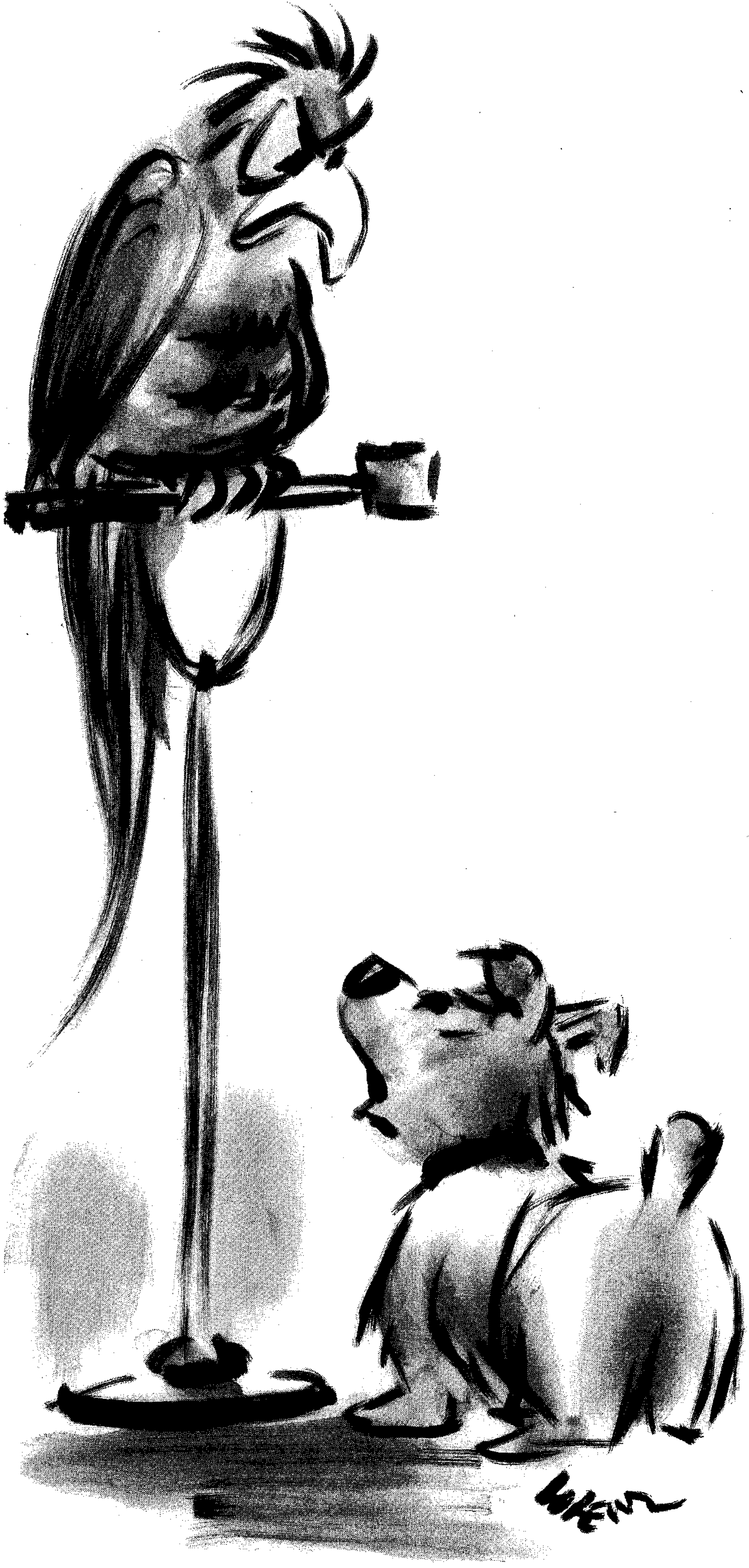
Julian saw that Obie was looking at the ceiling, already working in his mind. "Well, what's on the schedule first?"

"Electric wire. Then low-lustre paint for a couple of these rooms." He smiled, showing big, evenly spaced teeth. "Hide the cracks and raise the spirits."

After the Poxley Lumber Company truck left, Obie began work. By Saturday, the difference in the place was palpable. In the kitchen, he installed a new gray breaker box, and two walls in Julian's room were patched, sanded, and painted an airy antique white. Julian paid Obie in cash on the next Saturday morning and drove him to Dr. Setumahaven's office in Poxley, dropping him off and then going shopping. When he picked him up after the treatments, the expression Obie wore was that of a mar-



"Thanks, but I still want a dollar."



"Would it kill you to say 'Good doggy' once in a while?"

tyr, his eyes misshapen and dark with pain.

"You look like a boiled lobster," Julian told him.

Obie gently lowered himself into the passenger seat. "I got my money's worth today, all right."

They rode along the dusty road without talking, and Julian imagined that he could smell the laser burn.

That day, Obie mixed mortar and began patching the first-floor exterior wall. The next week, he worked on the downstairs bathroom, and the rest of the month he repaired the sewer line out to the septic tank and installed a cheap air-conditioner in Julian's room. The men tolerated each other and ate supper together on a card table set on the creaking floor of the big dining room. One rainy day, they sat under the wavering glow of a shorting light fixture while Obie feebly complained about how little Julian was paying him.

"Yeah, but you're getting cheap room and board."

Obie glanced up at the dusty brass disk holding a circle of twenty-five-watt bulbs. "I got to share it with the squirrels and the rats. You ought to charge them half the rent."

Julian motioned to Obie's neck, where Dr. Setumahaven's laser had reduced the spider to a dim blue shadow. "You're still making enough to get rid of your collection."

"If you paid me more, I could get 'em burnt off faster."

"I don't understand why you bother at all. I mean, who cares? The doctor's gotten rid of all the ones people can see."

Obie rubbed his narrow face, his whiskers crackling like coarse steel wool. "I used your phone to call my wife. She said she might could take me back if I got rid of all my idols. She calls 'em idols."

"Take you back?" Julian gave him a startled look. "Didn't you tell me that woman beat you with a broom?"

Obie looked down at his plate and smiled a faraway smile. "Aw, she's just a woman. Can't hurt a man unless she buys a gun."

Julian stood up and began to clear the table. "Next time you go see Setumahaven, tell him to stick that laser in your left ear. Light up your brains."

Obie watched him leave the room and called after him, "Ain't you never lonesome for some company?"

Julian came back in and stood behind his chair. "I've got to the point where I can live alone. I've built up my business, and now I've got this big house to keep me busy and give me a place in the world."

The light fixture made a futzing sound, and Obie blinked. "So this here place makes you feel important?"

Julian threw his arms wide to the echoing room. "I *am* important. What do you say to that?"

Obie turned toward the window, where the antique glass distorted everything beyond. "I say I need another box of roofin' nails so I can fix the tin on top of your importance."

The work went on through September, and Obie slaved over the corroded wiring and the slow-running plumbing. He ran his hands over every board in the building, finding where thousands of square nails had pulled free from the shrunken lumber. After Julian had gone to bed one night, he heard the back door to the main hall scuff open. Figuring Obie had come in for a drink of ice water, which was all he allowed him to have from the refrigerator, he dropped off to sleep. Soon, he was awakened by talking, just parts of words bouncing up the stairs to his single bed. He crept to the head of the stairway and heard Obie use a soft and rhythmic voice he had never heard before. He listened hard and heard him say, "Save me, O God, for the waters threaten my life; I am sunk in the abysmal swamp where there is no foothold." Julian walked down until he could see Obie seated at the old phone table, a flashlight shining down on an open Bible. He wondered if the call was long-distance, if he should yell out to stop reading Scripture into the phone at twelve cents a minute. Someone on the other end of the line must have said something, for Obie's voice stopped, and then said, "I'm workin', but I ain't able to save much. He cusses me and charges me for everthing. Sent me to town in his car to get tar and took the gas out my pay. What? Read Psalm 64? It'll cover him, will it?" Julian coughed, and Obie shined the flashlight up to the dark landing. "I got to go now. I'll call you fore long." He hung up and raised his face.

Julian's voice sliced down on him. "Was that that woman in Georgia?"

"It was."

"You planning on reading the whole Bible to her?"

"No."

"I'm glad to hear that, but when I get the bill I'll let you know the charges."

Obie turned his head toward the back door and looked as if he might speak, but the only sound that drifted up to Julian was the click of the flashlight and then the invisible creaking of the hallway's boards.

On Wednesday, he drove to Chance Poxley's store to buy a night table. Mr. Poxley leaned on the end of the counter and watched him walk in the door. The old man screwed up his face as though he smelled carrion.

"Do for you?"

"I need a small inexpensive table to put beside my bed."

"Uh-huh. That Parker boy still workin' for you?"

"He is, slowly."

"How much you payin' him, anyhow?"

Julian turned his head toward the store's cheap furniture, then looked back. "Has he been complaining to you?"

Mr. Poxley focussed on Julian's eyes. "That boy's a good worker. I believe he can fix a broke horse."

"He's all right."

"What you payin' him?"

"That's between me and him. He ought to pay me just to put up with his spooky ways."

"You bring him into town today?"

"He's over at Setumahaven's."

"I heard he had them on the bottoms of his feet. That must hurt like fire to have one took off there."

"I don't think about it."

Mr. Poxley blinked. "What *do* you think about, Mr. Typewriter Man?"

Julian looked at him. "What do you think I ought to think about?"

"How about payin' somebody does good work a livin' wage."

"Look, I admit he's a good worker and not bad to have on the place, but he doesn't bear the expense of commuting or of owning a car. Again, has he been complaining?"

Chance Poxley swung his head away. "That one won't complain."

"Well, by damn, show me a table, then."

He finished at the furniture store long before he was supposed to pick up Obie at the doctor's office. He parked his Dodge, angrily thought over Mr. Poxley's criticisms, and then went into the red brick city library, where he found a small Bible and walked into the stacks with it lest someone see him. He turned to Psalm 64 and read:

> Hide me from the conspiracy of the
>   wicked,
> From that noisy crowd of evildoers,
> Who sharpen their tongues like swords
> And aim their words like deadly arrows.

He slammed the book shut, holding the cover down as though it might spring back open accusingly. Between two musty stacks of dog-eared history books, he waited for the words to have some effect, but he felt not a thing, no change at all, though he couldn't resist touching his tongue to the roof of his mouth.

When Obie climbed into the Dodge that afternoon, he was bent forward with pain. Julian looked at him intently. "I wouldn't give anyone money to hurt me. If I were you, I'd have saved up for an automobile instead."

Obie closed his eyes and leaned his head against the cracked window. "What do I have need of a automobile, with no place to go?"

"Which one did they finish up today?"

"The battleship. Feels like he dug it out of me with a pocketknife."

Julian checked his rearview mirror before backing up. "Will you be able to work on the upstairs porch?"

"Gimme a couple hours. I'll see."

He drove into Memphis the next day, delivering refurbished typewriters and picking up dirty, nonfunctional machines from three behind-the-times businesses and two antique shops. He collected a few accounts and added up his money. The weather had been unseasonably warm, and he considered buying Obie a small electric fan but decided against it, because it would just make him unhappy if he ever had to live without one again. It was cruel, he thought, to make things too comfortable for someone going down in life.

Two weeks later, Obie walked up to Julian where he was working on an old gray Royal on the front porch and told him that he had an appointment with the doctor on Wednesday.

"I'm not going into town that day."

"It's important. I got to get the big one on my back burnt off."

He put down a slim screwdriver. "You have one on your back? What for?"

"It's a long story."

Julian straightened up in his tin chair. "Let me see it."

Obie unbuttoned his denim shirt and let it down and turned.

Julian put a hand to his chin. "Good Lord, it's Jesus."

"He cost me a lot."

He adjusted his glasses. "It's a good job for such a large image. Too bad I can't skin it off you and frame it or something."

Obie jerked up his shirt and began buttoning it. "Can you take me to town Wednesday or not?"

"Maybe so. If you pay my gas." Obie stared at him and Julian wondered how he could be such a mooch, expecting him to ride him around like a free taxi. "Now, what do you think about that railing up there?"

"I reckon it ought to be changed," Obie said, tucking in his shirt. "You might lean on it and fall and break your neck."

Julian waited outside the doctor's office, dozing behind the wheel, dreaming of tall gleaming pillars and him standing between them in an immaculate white suit. When the door on the passenger side opened, he woke up feeling sore and sour. He looked at his watch and frowned. "What did your red-dot doctor think about erasing God off you?"

Obie sat with his back away from the seat. "He only took him off the outside," he whispered.

"Are you sure he didn't replace him with Buddha?"

"Can we go on to the house?"

"Aw, can't you take a joke?"

Obie rolled his burning eyes toward him. "Do you have any aspirin?"

"There's a tin in the glove compartment. But don't ask me to stop and buy you a Coke."

In late October, the money finally ran out. Julian announced that he couldn't pay Obie anymore, but he would let him live on the place for free if he painted the outside. Obie walked out onto the front lawn under the two-hundred-year-old oak and stared. Julian stood between a pair of crazed pillars, watching him. After two minutes he called out, "What are you thinking?"

"I'm figurin' it would take me sixty gallons of primer and paint and a full year to do it myself. It needs to be sanded, washed, and scraped, and I'd have to live here three years past the end of the job to take the value out in rent."

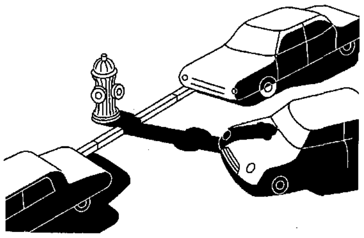
Julian stepped into the yard and looked up at the complex eaves, the paint-sucking galleries. "We can work something out."

"No, we cain't. I'm finished with my treatments. Setumahaven give me some fading chemical, and Monday I'll go to that tanning parlor by the cornmeal plant."

Julian took a step backward, startled. "What are you talking about? You can't leave."

Obie spread his arms like a gaunt bird ready to take flight. "The old me's gone. The new me's got to move on down the road."

Over the next several days, Obie's color changed from a mix of blood and ink to a mildly unhealthy skim-milk hue, and after several sessions at the Red Bug Tanning Salon his skin turned an even, rosy manila. One night, Julian decided that Obie might stay and work for him if he went into his meagre retirement savings and paid him a real salary.



The next morning, Julian got out of bed and fried a ham steak for breakfast, Obie's favorite. After the table was set, he went out into the yard, and his heart skipped a beat when he saw that the door to the old kitchen was wide open. Inside, the cot was empty, and Obie's duffelbag, always in the same spot under it, was gone. He began to panic and stared up at his sickly house, which loomed over him, leprous and crippled. He raced into Poxley, but no one at the bus station had seen him, and Dr. Setumahaven's office was closed. After driving around the town's narrow streets for half an hour, he parked and went into Chance Poxley's store.

The old man came out of his office and squinted at him. "What?"

"I can't find my hired man."

"Well."

"He just left without a word."

Mr. Poxley leaned over and pressed the Clear button on his adding machine. "That so?"

"Have you seen him?"

The old man shook his head. "It's been a while. He did tell me he'd finished up with the skin doc. I don't think he had much need of your job anymore."

"He told me he used to stay with a cousin. Where's he live?"

"He's not there. That boy pitched him out to begin with."

Julian stared at the store's broad plate-glass windows, emblazoned with shoe-polish lettering: "Cash Talks." "I've got to find him."

"Unless I miss my guess, you can't afford him anymore."

"What are you saying?"

Mr. Poxley looked down and his voice softened. "What do you need him for, anyway?"

Julian's mouth fell open a bit and he focussed on a new gas range to the right of the counter. He could fix a typewriter, but nothing else in the world, and he didn't know if he could continue living in the old mansion, unable as he was to keep it nailed together. But the real problem came upon him as suddenly as thunder. He'd be alone. The house and its canyon rooms would swallow him up, the only sound would be his own footsteps thrown back in his face, and when he stopped moving he'd meet a silence as vast as night.

In the middle of November, a freakish weather pattern set in—howling wind with ice in its teeth. Julian was adjusting a Royal 440, and around sundown his hands began to shake. The single-pane windows and the shrunken doors shivered in their frames. There was no insulation anywhere and what little residual heat there was soon leaked through the ceiling lath. He put on sweaters and two jackets and remembered that the house had no functioning heating system. The squatters had used tin trash burners, running the stovepipes through the windows, but all that had been thrown out. Obie had told him that the fireplace flues were no longer safe, that the chimneys were falling apart in the attic. He climbed into bed under every sheet and quilt he owned, deciding that the next night would be warmer.

The next night brought a whip-cracking gale, and a weatherman on his car's radio announced that a solid week of unusually cold temperatures was on the way. Julian drove into town and bought an electric heater, but under the fifteen-foot ceilings the device was like a spark at the North Pole. The third night, he slept in his car with the motor running, but, when he checked the gas gauge on waking, he knew he couldn't afford to do that again. He got out of the back seat cursing the oil industry and the whole Middle East and loaded up five repaired typewriters for delivery in Memphis.

The fourth night, he became ill and for two weeks suffered through a cold, which turned into influenza. After a teasing warm spell, December's weather came back mortally cold, and he moved out of the mansion into Obie's little kitchen house. The electric heater and the old wood-burning range together would keep the room at fifty degrees, and he could sleep. But it was a miserable place to stay, its attic full of manic squirrels, its floor a dull smear of ground-in soot and dirt, its walls impregnated with the oily emanations of ten thousand meals.

One day in mid-December, there was a knock at the kitchen-house door and he found Chance Poxley standing in the tall dead grass, wearing a small tweed fedora, shading his eyes with one hand.

"I can't sleep. I think I'll get up and solve all my problems."

Julian held the door open only a little. "What can I do for you?"

"Can I step in? This wind is about to freeze me female."

He backed into the room, and the old man came up the three wooden steps. When his eyes adjusted, he looked around. "My God, you're livin' like a jailbird in here."

"Next year I'll arrange to keep the big house warm."

Mr. Poxley shook his head. "I hear in the old days it took three servants workin' full time to keep all the fireplaces going with coal. You can't even buy coal anymore."

"Did you come out here to discuss my heating problems?"

"No." The old man handed him a sheet of paper.

"What's this?"

"You're two months behind on your payments."

Julian reddened. He stood staring at the invoice for a long time as the squirrels began chasing one another above their heads. "Are you sure I haven't paid these?"

"If you can show me the cancelled checks, we'll know, won't we?"

"I'll examine my records, and if they indicate that I've missed paying you I'll mail you a check."

Mr. Poxley put out a hand. "I'd appreciate a check right now."

"But I can't do that. I might wind up paying you twice."

The old man lowered his arm and looked over at the smoking stove. "Let me tell you some facts. People that take over a place like this have a lot of money. They can afford to hire a bunch of contractors to do a proper restoration."

"My dream is to do just that."

"At the rate you're goin', it'll take you a hundred years just to make the place look second-rate. And if you stay out here it'll kill you."

Julian folded his arms. "It's my heritage."

"There's people that'll pay a bit of money for this property. With what you sell it for, you could get a tight little house with a shop out back."

"And you'd get your money for the refrigerator and the air-conditioner."

Chance Poxley fixed him with his watery eyes and said in a low voice, "Look, if you don't at least make up the payments, I'll have to put a lien on the place. So will the folks down at the lumberyard, who I hear tell have advanced you considerable supplies on credit."

Julian opened the door and pointed outside. "You'll get your money."

The old man looked into the weedy

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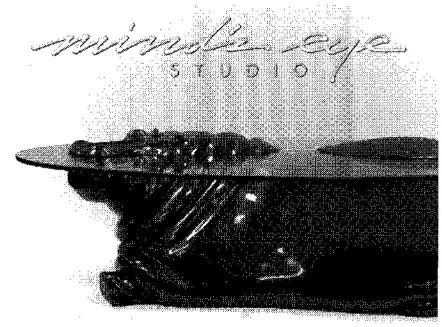

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yard. "Well, I got to admit I've never been throwed out of a worse place than this." He eased down the steps and turned around. "You know, I didn't come here to cause you any trouble. But I got to tell you, when the sheriff found out an owner was on this property he checked into the tax records and told me he don't care what the lawyers say, you owe county tax on this place back to 1946." The old man's hat blew off and his thin white hair was torn by the wind. "I didn't want to be the one to tell you."

Julian waved him away as though he were a stray dog. "Get off my property," he yelled. "I can buy and sell every damned one of you." He didn't know where this cutting voice had come from, its load of arrogance perhaps conjured up out of the red dirt around him, the dead fields and parched lumber of his inheritance.

Julian sat down that night to balance his checkbook and found that he'd have to transfer money from his tiny emergency fund at the bank in Memphis to hold off his creditors for a week or so. After that, he was bankrupt.

One night of gun-blue sky, the temperature went down to nine degrees. Julian had stuffed the cookstove with scrap wood he'd scavenged and the stovepipe was glowing red halfway up to the flimsy ceiling. An old Remington manual was set up on the table and it refused to move when he hit the Tab key, the fresh oil on its parts turned to gum by the cold. At about eleven o'clock, he had to go to the bathroom, so he put on padded slippers and all the clothes in the room and opened the door to the night. The wind was a black punishment, and his bones were rattling by the time he reached the back door of the big house. As soon as he stepped inside, his feet began to sting, and when he turned on the hall light he could see water running deep on the floor. He splashed over to the foot of the stairs and looked up at a ladder of water coming down, a scrim of ice on the edges like a mountain stream. Upstairs, he found that a frozen toilet had shattered and fallen away from the wall, snapping off the feed line at floor level, and water was jetting up to the ceiling. He had no idea where he could turn the water off. And only one person could tell him.

He sat next to the phone table in the hall and hooked his feet on a chair rung to keep them out of the water. Pulling out his service receipts from the drawer under the phone, he studied the column of calls until he found a number in Georgia. He had done so much for Obie that the man should at least tell him where a valve was. Looking up, he watched lines of icicles forming where water sluiced through cracks in the plaster.

After many rings, someone in Georgia picked up the phone, and he asked to speak to Obie Parker. "This is his former employer," he shouted into the receiver. "And I need to ask him a question."

A woman's reedy voice answered, sounding self-righteous and glad to be so. "Do you have any idea a-tall what time it is?"

"Yes, I'm sorry, but this is important."

"Obadiah is asleep, and a workin' man needs all the rest he's due, so I'm not a-goin' to roust him out of a warm bed, Mister."

Julian's voice rose in pitch. "But I've got a broken water pipe and—"

"A broke pipe, you say? Mister, there's people in the world got a whole lot worse than that wrong in their lives. They got the cancer, they got children sellin' dope, they got trailers blown apart by the tornado wind that leaves them standin' in the yard starin' up at the stars. But you know what? Ain't a one of them callin' me up at twelve-ten at night to whine about no broke water pipe."

"It's eleven-ten."

"Mister, you caught up in your own little world so much you think the rest of God's universe is in your time zone. It's twelve-ten in Georgia."

A piano-size raft of plaster detached from the ceiling and fell at his feet, covering him with a surf of freezing water. "Good Lord, lady, I've *got* to talk to your husband."

"People in Hell *got* to have strawberry shortcake, but they don't get it." She hung up.

He lowered the buzzing receiver and looked down the long, swamped hall toward the front of the house that was his glory. He knew everything about it, and at the same time nothing at all. The wind flattened the tall dry grass next to the pillars in a dead shout that told him not a thing that would help. Suddenly, he was startled by the jangling phone.

"Hello?"

"Hey. It's Obie. I heard my wife a-talkin' to you."

The voice was like a warm, comforting hand, but Julian couldn't help shouting, "Where the hell's the water valve to the house? I'm flooded out, here."

"If you got water on the floors, don't go after that pump switch in the panel box. It'll knock you into the next world. Look under the sink and turn that third valve to the right."

He sloshed to the kitchen and did as he was told. With a house-shaking crash, the dining-room plaster fell all at once. Shivering, he ran back to the phone, wet up to the knees, and climbed onto the chair. "What do I do now, Obie? All the plaster in the place is coming down."

The voice drifted in from Georgia, sleepy and soft. "You can't afford no plaster crew, that's for sure." After a pause, he said, "Might be time to sell out."

"Never," he yelled into the receiver. "I'll never leave here in a million years."

"One time, I said I'd never give up my tattoos."

"Thanks, but I don't need your moralizing lesson. I need you to come back and fix things."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Smith, but it sounds like things is past fixin'."

Something dropped onto the kitchen floor like a truckload of gravel. "What can I do about the plaster?"

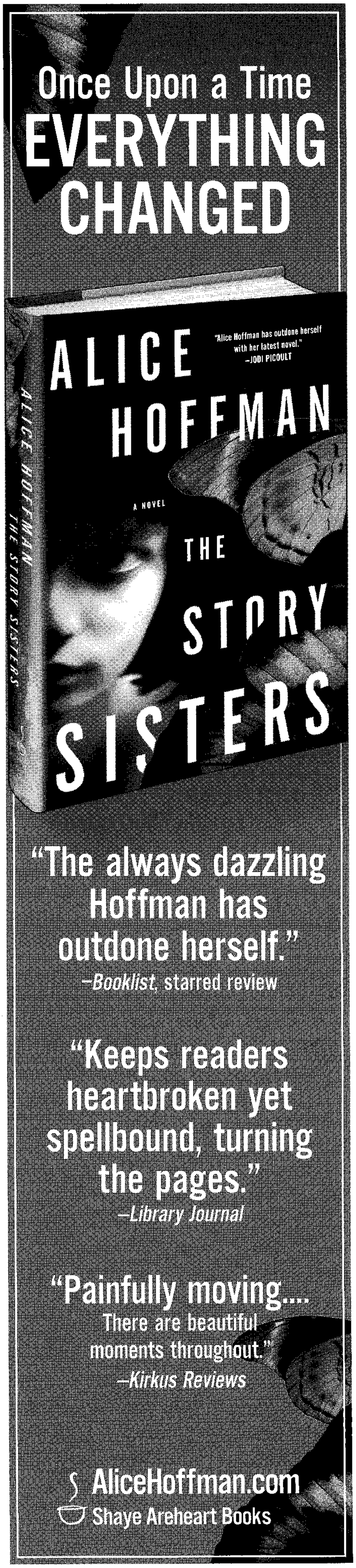
"That plaster's the least of your problems."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if you don't know I can't tell you."

The light fixture above Julian's head filled with water and popped off in a shower of blue sparks, and he dropped the phone. He was blind and trembling in the watery dark, and he began to struggle down the hall toward his outbuilding, desperate for the warmth of the red-hot stove. When he opened the back door, he saw that the old kitchen house had turned into a windblown orange fireball, streamers of flame running toward him through the grass. He stumbled outside and began stamping at the brush until he understood that with its brick porch and pillars the big house would probably not catch fire. Through a sidelight at the rear door he watched the flames race in the wind, flowing under his car and fanning out to light the corncrib, the smokehouse, and the big sagging barn, which went up in a howl of crackling lumber and dried-out hay. At one point, he tried to call the Poxley volunteer fire department, but the creosote pole that supported the telephone wire had already gone up like a torch, taking his service away. In ten minutes, the fire circled the house, and he climbed up to the belvedere to track its progress as it burned to the ditches surrounding his tract, taking out the pump house and a tractor shed, and incinerating his Dodge, which burned hot and high, killing most of the foliage of the live oak shading it.

At dawn, he could see that but for the roadside oaks everything was gone, burned off the face of the earth as if by a powerful beam of light, the house standing naked and singed in a field of white ash. He stayed up in the belvedere, hoping the new sun would warm him, but daylight brought a shrill wind crying like the voices of all the families, wealthy and destitute, who had lived in his house, who, each in turn, had given it up through death or duress and left it to falter. He stood unshaved and burning with fever, dressed in sopping house slippers and several layers of old robes and cotton jackets, waiting—for what, he wasn't sure. But in a few minutes he heard a car on the gravel road, looked down through the bubbled glass, and saw them. Even from a distance, he could tell that Mr. Poxley's mouth had fallen open at the sight of the guttering outbuildings. He and a big deputy stepped out of the police car and walked to the roadside fence. Each man held down his hat with one hand and bore a folded piece of paper in the other, liens and tax bills that would take the place away, and Julian felt house and history shrink to nothing beneath him—a void replaced by a vision of himself, dressed in borrowed clothes and defeat, spirited away that very evening on a lurching bus bound for Memphis and sitting next to some untaught, impoverished person, perhaps even another long-suffering and moralizing carpenter. ♦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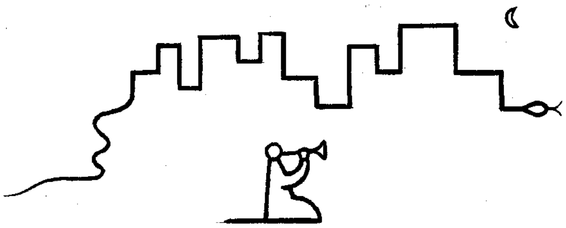

POP MUSIC

WONDER TOWN

Thirty years of Sonic Youth.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

During the nineteen-eighties, there was a sort of competition among certain members of the American independent-rock scene to make the most hideous noise possible. Guitars were rebuilt to produce wild and staticky new sounds, then played painfully loudly; lyrics and stage antics were often gruesome and intimidating. Butthole Surfers, a psychedelic-punk band from Texas, projected graphic footage of penis-reconstruction surgery on a wall behind them while they performed, and a woman danced around the stage wearing only a loincloth. Steve Albini and Santiago Durango, members of the band Big Black, made their guitars screech at frequencies that seemed designed to give listeners tinnitus. Michael Gira, the lead singer of the almost comically misanthropic band Swans, sang about rape and ritual physical humiliation, and on more than one occasion leaped into the crowd to assault an audience member.

Though Sonic Youth have always been a sober, hardworking bunch, they began their career as an arty, hardcore-influenced band, as partial to abrasive racket as some of their noise-rock peers. Their music was often accompanied by lurid images: the video for their 1985 song "Death Valley '69" reënacts the Manson murders, complete with fake blood and spilled intestines and the bassist, Kim Gordon, sporting dark hair and wielding a shotgun.

One summer night in 1986, I saw Sonic Youth play at CBGB. The club was oppressively hot. Thurston Moore, six feet six and sandy-haired, originally from Bethel, Connecticut, looked slightly distracted at first, like a surfer who'd wandered indoors. He opened the set by pressing a button on a large boom box; Madonna's "Into the Groove" began to play while he fiddled, slowly, with his gear. I loved Madonna, and I was a little afraid that the band was making fun of her. But they let her song finish without comment, and then launched into "Tom Violence," a dirge-like piece that drones and whines. If the bright, square notes of "Into the Groove" came from a world of easy round numbers, Sonic Youth's music was made of intricate fractions. Each song was crammed with information. Moore swayed as if the stage were heaving, and he sang as though he were trying to calm himself down. Lee Ranaldo, a rugged kid from Long Island with a shaggy hair style, stood stage right, whipping his guitar through the air, now and then crouching to get a better purchase on it. Kim Gordon was center stage, bass in hand; she was the least seasoned musician onstage, and her playing was simple and relentless. Cool, blond, serene, she was like the lead in a movie who refuses to read from the script, more Marina Vlady than Brigitte Bardot.

I stood close to the stage, crushed in a group of people who had probably been pogoing or moshing to any number of bands that week. As loud and powerful as Sonic Youth were, the music was not straight punk, or even modified punk. I had no idea what kind of music it was. "White Kross"—which would soon make its way onto their 1987 album, "Sister"—was fast, straightforward rock, except that every guitar was strangely tuned, moaning and howling instead of crunching in satisfying consonance. The song that stood out that night was one of the quietest, "Shadow of a Doubt," from the band's fourth album, "Evol." Moore and Ranaldo played a series of lightly fretted harmonics that, just as they were on the brink of becoming actual chords, dissolved in a series of electric pops. Gordon whispered the lyrics: "Met a stranger on a train," and then, later, "Swear it wasn't meant to be." The guitars opened for a surge of ringing chords in the middle of the song, but it was determined to remain unresolved. The feeling was a little like being held hostage in a room with someone who refuses to turn on the lights.

When Moore and Ranaldo first got together, they were playing what Ranaldo calls "a serious guitar and an O.K. one"—a Fender Telecaster Deluxe and a mid-sixties Harmony. Sonic Youth's 1982 début EP was recorded and written in standard tuning, a first and a last for the band. After that, Moore and Ranaldo began restringing and retuning those guitars and a couple of "cheap Japanese no-names." (At the beginning of shows, while the crowd waited, they would spend close to half an hour tinkering with the many guitars stacked on either side of the stage.) Because open tunings sometimes allow a guitarist to play parts without having to fret any notes at all, Sonic Youth's music gained a resonance that's simply not possible when you have to touch the strings with both hands. ("Death Valley '69" is a good example: Ranaldo plays a guitar tuned—bottom to top—to two low F-sharps, two medium F-sharps, and an E and a B. Much of his playing involves no fretting at all.) Take these tunings, play them with nontraditional items like screwdrivers, run the signal

Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, Steve Shelley, Kim Gordon, Mark Ibold, and Lee Ranaldo. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

through a variety of effects pedals, and you've got a pretty big palette. More like conductors than like typical players, these guitarists managed to turn their instruments into a kind of choir.

The band's latest release, "The Eternal," is its sixteenth full-length effort, and my favorite Sonic Youth album in a long time, though I've liked plenty of them. The members of Sonic Youth are in their forties and fifties now, and their recording technique has changed very little since their first sessions. "We're still playing old analog boxes and electric guitars with guitar amps, recording on tape, mixing on tape," Ranaldo says. "We haven't gotten any more professional, thank God." Songs are communally written, and developed over long periods of improvising. Mark Ibold (who was once the bassist for Pavement) recorded and wrote with the band this time around, making it a five-piece again. (Steve Shelley, the drummer, has been with Sonic Youth since 1985. The multi-instrumentalist Jim O'Rourke joined the band in the late nineties but left in 2005.)

On this record, they've focussed on crafting songs rather than open-ended compositions. Moore told me recently, "I remember being on tour in the nineties, when we started releasing more kind of lengthy, experimental stuff on our own label, and Malkmus"—the Pavement songwriter Stephen Malkmus—"was driving us somewhere. We were playing it in his rental car, and he said, 'I hope you guys don't leave the power of the song behind.' He liked Sonic Youth as a songwriting band—he had a sort of charming concern about it." One of "The Eternal" 's dreamiest tracks, "Antenna," begins with a simple guitar figure plucked over a brief wash of white noise and thumping tomtoms. Moore sings, in a gentle, conversational way, "My darling cruises the streets for pleasure, skyscrapers in the dead love dawn." The lyric might be a rueful nod to the chorus of "The Wonder," from the 1988 release "Daydream Nation": "I'm just walking around, your city is a wonder town."

Much of the pleasure here is in the sound. The producer and engineer John Agnello has captured all sides of the band's multipurpose guitars. I worried that the album didn't have one of those lengthy, broken-open garbage bags of noise, a song like "Expressway to Yr. Skull," from 1986, in which all the dragons and feathers and firecrackers and water pistols get to run free. But "Calming the Snake," though it's only three and a half minutes long, comes amazingly close. It compresses the push-me-pull-you rhythm of soft lulls and big buildups into pop-song length without sacrificing any heat or unruly noise, and it features Gordon on vocals, doing the kind of punk yowling that the band hasn't tried in a while. "Come on down, down to the river, come on down, I want to feel you shiver," she hisses.

Gordon does the screaming on "The Eternal" while the boys do the nice singing. Several songs feature one or more of them singing in unison, an arrangement trick that Sonic Youth has so far largely avoided. Moore told me that the band was purposefully exploring more conventional vocal techniques, such as "getting Lee to harmonize with my non-singing." Nonetheless, as has always been the group's way, the vocals come only after the music for each piece is recorded. At that point, Moore, Gordon, and Ranaldo divvy up the songs, and each tries singing on a different one, sometimes trading after a week or so if someone is stuck, sometimes adding a track on top of someone else's. The fact that the music is finished first is a point of pride, and is perhaps the best testament to the band's career-long loyalty to the possibilities of sound. "For us, songs get born out of a guitar's tonality as much as they get born out of chords and structures," Ranaldo says. "We're creating pieces of music as pieces of music. That's all we're thinking about. 'Does this piece of music sound good?' "

By the early nineties, dozens of bands had picked up the Sonic Youth habit, developing their own proprietary tunings and making waves of noise. This year, Fender will issue the Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo signature Jazzmasters, each kitted out according to the players' preferences for things like finish, pickup, headstock, and width of frets. The band that once specialized in manhandling pawnshop guitars has become an institution. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Sasha Frere-Jones's pop-music blog.

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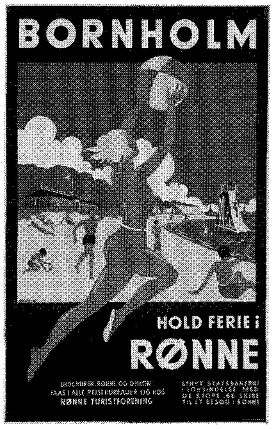

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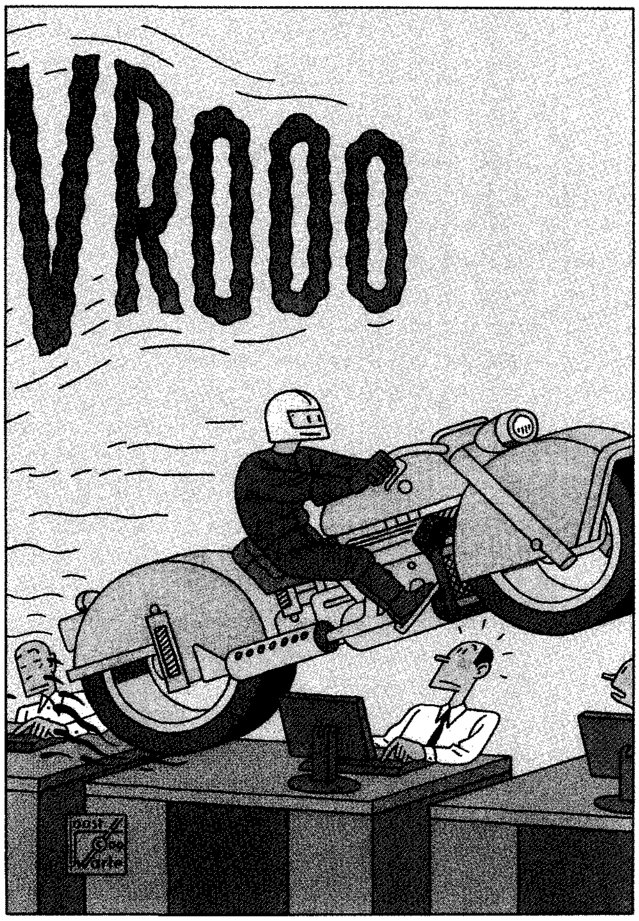
A CRITIC AT LARGE

OUT OF THE OFFICE

Fast bikes, slow food, and the workplace wars.

BY KELEFA SANNEH

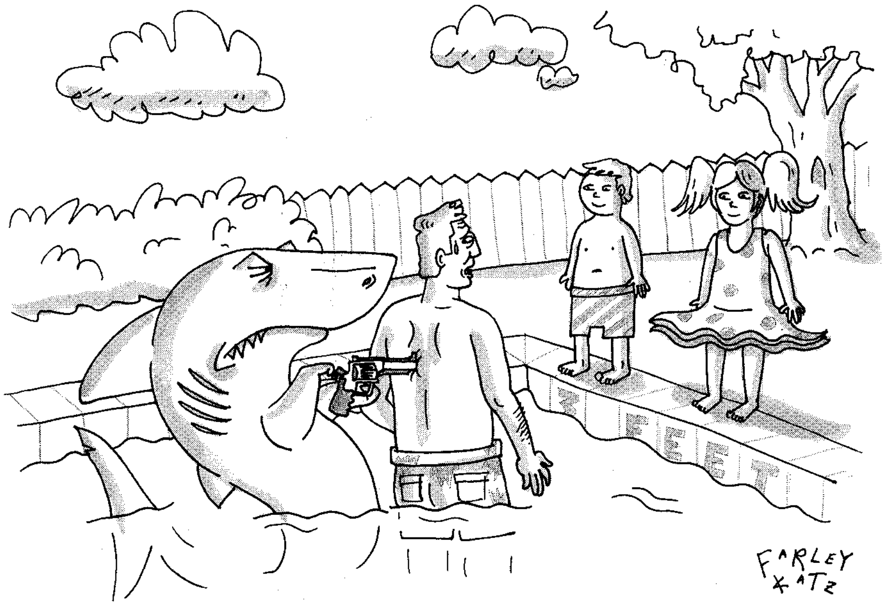
In 1974, Robert Pirsig—a Korean War veteran, a philosopher, a former writing instructor, a survivor of shock treatment, and, by all accounts, a talented author of technical manuals—published "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values." It is a novel, but only barely (Pirsig didn't bother to change the names of his friends), and it follows the narrator as he rides West with his young son, from Minneapolis to San Francisco. Readers hoping for advice about motorcycles, or about meditation, found something else entirely: picturesque anecdotes and ominous reveries, interrupted by dense seminars on the "self-defeating" nature of technophobia, the malignance of inferior workmanship, the "ugliness" of Immanuel Kant's aesthetics, and the importance of a quality called Quality. The book, gnomic but good-natured, eventually sold about five million copies, spurred on by some extraordinarily positive reviews. (Writing in this magazine, George Steiner compared it to "Moby-Dick.") Pirsig attracted a cult of seekers eager to get past what he called "the primary America of freeways and jet flights and TV and movie spectaculars," eager to explore the country's back roads and byways—and eager to read his next book. They had a long wait, made longer, perhaps, by the murder, in 1979, of his son, Chris, the young rider from "Zen." When "Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals" finally arrived, in 1991, it didn't have nearly the same impact: it was more abstruse, it wasn't a sequel, and it wasn't even tangentially about motorcycles.



The pro-craft camp deplores the confinements of corporate life.

Thirty-five years later, a very different biker-philosopher has delivered a new indictment of "primary America." Matthew B. Crawford is even more fanatical about motorcycle maintenance than Pirsig's narrator. He's never happier than when he's rebuilding a master cylinder or dislodging a stuck oil seal, and his descriptions of the open road can seem slightly anticlimactic. For him, the journey is just the journey; the garage is the destination. Crawford has a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago (where Pirsig had been a grad student), a fellowship at the University of Virginia, and, most important, a scrappy motorcycle-repair shop in Richmond. His book is called "Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work" (Penguin; $25.95), and it's intended as a challenge, a declaration of gearhead pride in an ever more gearless world.

Crawford's book arrives just as a vague sense of dissatisfaction with the demands and rewards of the modern economy is coalescing into something like a movement. In 1998, the sociologist Richard Sennett published "The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism," in which he saw soul-destroying consequences in our new work habits—endless hours spent at flexible jobs, performing abstract tasks on computer screens. Last year, in "The Craftsman" (Yale; $18), Sennett suggested that skilled labor could be a way to resist corporate mediocrity. The environmentalist writer Bill McKibben proposed something similar in "Deep Economy," which condemned the ruinous effects of endless economic expansion and urged readers to live smaller, simpler, more local lives. This artisanal revival has been particularly pronounced among foodies, thanks in part to the writer Michael Pollan, who helped popularize an American variant of the Italian culinary-agrarian movement known as Slow Food. In "The Omnivore's Dilemma" and "In Defense of Food," Pollan surveyed the excesses of the "industrial food chain" and paid thoughtful tribute to small farms and local produce. (You can see evidence of Pollan's influence on the White House lawn, where Michelle Obama has planted an organic vegetable garden.) These ideas have crept farther toward the mainstream in the wake of the economic collapse, which inspired calls for a return to real work—a return, in other words, to activities more tangible (and, it was hoped, less perilous) than complex swaps of abstract financial products. Crawford means his book to be a philosophical manifesto for a dawning age: an ode to old-fashioned hard work, and an argument that localism can help cure our spiritual and economic woes. An excerpt appeared in the *Times Mag-*



"Come on in, kids. The water's fine—just fine."

azine, where Pollan is a contributing writer, and it stayed near the top of the paper's most e-mailed list for a week.

Crawford allows that his life has been "a bit unusual": he spent much of his youth living in a nomadic commune on the West Coast. By the time he was fifteen, he had an apprenticeship in a Porsche repair shop, and soon he was retrofitting his aging Volkswagen Beetle with an engine designed to make it do all sorts of things that Volkswagen Beetles aren't meant to do, like go fast. He studied physics at the University of California at Santa Barbara, worked as an electrician, and then earned a doctorate in political philosophy from the University of Chicago, although he found himself increasingly distracted by an ambitious motorcycle-rehabilitation project. After a few unhappy months at a Washington think tank, he quit to start his repair shop, Shockoe Moto, which is, these days, his most important credential. He writes about fixing motorcycles as an extension of philosophical investigation, a form of problem-solving that helps him understand Heidegger's theory of skillful coping. He says, too, that fixing bikes has given him "a place in society," as well as an "economically viable" job that won't evaporate or get moved overseas. He more or less promises that if you get trained in skilled labor—as a mechanic, a plumber, an electrician, a carpenter—you, too, can have all that. In his view, a cluster of cultural prejudices have steered many potential tradesmen into college, and then toward stultifying office jobs, which provide less satisfaction and less security than skilled manual labor, and sometimes less money.

For Crawford, the failure to appreciate skilled manual labor is a symptom of something even worse: a narcissistic refusal to grapple with the material world. He quotes a long scene from "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," in which the narrator has a frustrating encounter with careless mechanics who can't be bothered to correctly diagnose his bike. Crawford's stern verdict: this is "at once an ethical and a cognitive failure." Such mechanics show, in their disregard for the motorcycle, how little they care about their profession, and, by extension, their fellow-citizens. Crawford says that big corporations—including, for instance, the ones that produce cheap motorcycle engines that aren't worth fixing—tend to encourage this kind of anomie, by forcing workers to stick to mindless tasks or insipid scripts, thereby making it hard for them to take pride in their work. But Crawford is no Marxist. For him, the solution to big business is small business; he pits the work ethic and scrappy spirit of "small commercial enterprise" against the "softly despotic tendencies" of "outsized corporations." His book takes up a variant of William F. Buckley's old conservative rallying cry: it stands athwart capitalism, yelling, "Stop."

It seems that every generation discovers anew what Crawford has discovered: that work is—that we are—stupid and getting stupider. In "The Wealth of Nations," which appeared in 1776, Adam Smith argued that while professional specialization broadened the economic activity of a society, it narrowed the lives of workers themselves. "Among nations of hunters, the lowest and rudest state of society, such as we find it among the native tribes of North America, every man is a warrior, as well as a hunter," he wrote. By contrast, a worker with a dull, repetitive job would inevitably degenerate: "The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life." Crawford's low-level data analysts are about as miserable as Smith's "manufactory" drones, and for the same reason: they're bored.

If boring labor is a threat to one's humanity, it stands to reason that interesting labor can be a form of redemption. The Victorian sage John Ruskin helped invent the modern cult of the craftsman: he was both an idealist and an aesthete, and he argued that miserable workers produced miserable work, and vice versa. In "The Craftsman," Sennett portrays Ruskin as a quirky and quixotic radical, sensitive to the intricate demands of great craftsmanship, and hopeful that the glories of Venetian architecture might help inspire workers to resist the ravages of "mechanical domination." Yet the call to craft is in some ways a conservative call: it asks workers to seek fulfillment through personal diligence, not politics. In "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," which was published in 1849, Ruskin proposed a novel, if unlikely, antidote to revolutionary fervor: "There is a vast quantity of idle energy among European nations at this time, which ought to go into handicrafts." He advocated not freedom from toil but freedom through toil, and he compared the demands of craftsmanship to the demands of God in the Anglican liturgy: the Master in "whose service is perfect freedom." He opposed the noble ethic of service to "that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty."

But how do you serve craftsmanship without serving the market? How can an independent artisan insure that he doesn't become an entrepreneur—and, in time, a corporate executive? This question haunts Crawford's book, and it helps explain why he takes pains to present himself as merely an aspiring craftsman with "execrable" skills; a professional mechanic who still feels "like an amateur." These disclaimers are meant to assure readers that, in a society afflicted by hyperspecialization, Crawford isn't some technical wizard; he's just a regular guy who happens to be handy with a seal puller. The idea is that we can become him, and that he won't become someone else—he won't build a bigger shop, hire more mechanics, expand into Maryland and then Delaware, create a lucrative line of Shockoe Moto leather jackets, and, finally, collaborate with BMW on a gleaming series of R69S replicas. He won't, in other words, end up like Gene Kahn, the organic-farming pioneer who appears in "The Omnivore's Dilemma" as a vexed figure: Cascadian Farm, which he founded in 1971, has thrived and grown and joined the corporate food chain; Kahn is now the vice-president for sustainable development at General Mills.

Despite the years he spent in the commune, Crawford was devoutly anti-hippie as a teen-ager, and in "Shop Class as Soulcraft" he takes great pleasure in contravening liberal pieties. His book is filled with guys doing guy things, and women often figure as foils. He sneers at the "harpies" who once criticized him at a political-theory conference; he calls a faux-custom motorcycle a "Betty Crocker Cruiser"; and he mentions that Volkswagens "tend to get passed around like cheap whores." In the introduction, he expresses the hope, however remote, that "women, no less than men, will recognize the appeal of tangible work that is straightforwardly useful." But the book is, in large part, a treatise on the joys and frustrations of manliness in a post-manly age.

For Crawford, offices are profoundly feminized places. Reading a study about the sneaky ways in which managers assert their authority, he compares office life to "being part of a clique of girls," with a brutal hierarchy hidden beneath "the forms and manners of sisterhood." He singles out management-theory books for particular scorn, and he excoriates a (female) consultant whose corporate indoctrination sessions masquerade as touchy-feely exercises in self-realization. Far better, he says, to work at a garage or a construction site, where dirty jokes are not only tolerated but encouraged; where there are (as yet) no seminars on sexual harassment; where "one feels like a man, not a cog in a machine." The modern workplace reflects our evolving views about gender—and, for Crawford, that might be part of the problem.

If "Shop Class as Soulcraft" is a book about male anxiety, it is also a book about American anxiety. It portrays a country under siege, beset on all sides by foreign workers who are willing to do everything more quickly and cheaply: there are motorcycle parts from Mexico, X-ray analyses from India, service manuals written by "some hapless Japanese student of English as a Second Language." (When people in America say that certain jobs are "disappearing," they usually mean that non-Americans are now doing them. Skeptical readers can savor the irony that Shockoe Moto specializes in imports.) Crawford implies that by embracing skilled labor America can help reverse this trend, although the logic isn't quite clear: if the demand for mechanics is basically inelastic, how can it offset other trends? Crawford allows himself some nostalgia for the days when financial transactions were conducted face to face, and when bankers judged someone's creditworthiness by asking around "at the grocery and the hardware store"—after all, everyone was local. An antipathy, however mild, to foreignness is indispensable to the creed of localism, which seeks to make our economic worlds more intelligible by shrinking them. When Pollan visited some of the industrial-scale organic farms that Gene Kahn works with, the first surprise was the workers: he confessed that he hadn't expected to see "migrant labor crews" on an organic farm.

In this decade, the revival of traditional craftsmanship and homegrown food has generally been seen as a progressive cause, loosely aligned with environmentalism, blue-state snobbery, and all-purpose anti-corporate activism. But "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" was a hit partly because it pushed back against lefty idealism. "Everyone's just about out of gumption," Pirsig's narrator says. "And I think it's about time to return to the rebuilding of *this* American resource—individual worth. There are political reactionaries who've been saying something close to this for years. I'm not one of them, but to the extent they're talking about real individual worth and not just an excuse for giving more money to the rich, they're right." Crawford himself has cultivated alliances with conservative institutions. He once received funding from the right-leaning John M. Olin Foundation (he admits to spending its research grant on an air compressor), and the think tank where he worked, which goes unnamed in the book, was the George C. Marshall Institute, which advances a skeptical view of the environmental movement. (He was the executive director, and says that his job consisted of "coming up with the best arguments money could buy.") He recently delivered a lecture based on the book at the offices of the Heritage Foundation, and his *Times Magazine* essay earned an enthusiastic endorsement from the Web site of *National Review*. Although Crawford avoids overt political advocacy, he lays out his ideological program in a sharply worded paragraph near the end of the book:

> It is now the capitalist who says, "Workers of the world, unite!," the better to dissolve those "inefficiencies" in the labor market (that is, high wages) that arise from political boundaries. The slogan once expressed a hope to organize a body of workers who were dispersed and hence exploitable, whereas now it captures the desire for a mass of "human resources," exploitable because undifferentiated. This latter intention is accompanied by all the easy moral prestige of multiculturalism, so it finds its champions on the erstwhile Left. Those at the top of the food chain get a new identity in which to take pride, that of the sushi-eating, Brazilian-girlfriend-having cosmopolitan.

Crawford seems to yearn for a rethinking of left and right, as they're now configured. Agrarianism, like environmentalism, hasn't always been considered a progressive cause, and there's nothing inherently liberal about artisanal cheese, or artisanal bikes—and, just as important, nothing inherently conservative about multinational corporations. Rod Dreher, a *National Review* contributor and the author of "Crunchy Cons," is ardently pro-organic and ardently anti-gay marriage. Victor Davis Hanson, the author of "Fields Without Dreams: Defending the Agrarian Idea," is also the author of "Mexifornia," about the dangers posed by immigration. And one of the heroes of "The Omnivore's Dilemma" describes himself as a "Christian-conservative-libertarian-environmental-lunatic farmer." Part of the appeal of the localist-artisanal creed, for certain liberals and conservatives alike, is precisely that it's anti-cosmopolitan, anti-corporate, anti-progress—an alternative to the creative destruction of capitalism. It tugs against the shared assumptions of most Democrats and Republicans: that America's future is bright; that change is good.

Proponents of homegrown food and "(very) small business"—which is how Crawford describes his shop—sometimes talk about how artisanalism improves the lives of workers. But the genius of this loosely organized movement is that it's not a labor movement; it's a consumer movement. Pollan writes about the Italian Slow Foodists who realized that "even connoisseurship can have a politics," and he voices his own hope that "an eater in closer touch with his senses will find less pleasure in a box of Chicken McNuggets than in a pastured chicken or a rare breed of pig." In fact, pleasure isn't merely the motivating force in Pollan's books; it's the goal. His chief criticism of Chicken McNuggets is that they are insufficiently delicious. (Has he tried them with the hot-mustard sauce?) He is both a gourmand and an idealist, which means that he tastes the entire food economy each time he has a meal. When he saw those migrant laborers, maybe he was thinking about their wages—but he was also thinking about his supper.

Crawford promises more than good taste; his book sets its sights on the blue-collar worker, not on the fussy consumer. And so he writes dutifully about economic trends, changing labor markets, and the uncertain future of America's information economy. But he can't feign much enthusiasm for, say, jobs in the health-care sector, no matter how satisfying or useful or plentiful those jobs might be. Really, he likes engines and building things and fixing things; his dedication to his shop is rooted in his admiration for his clients and for what he calls the "kingly sport" of motorcycle riding. In other words, his work is "useful" only insofar as it enables men to ride motorcycles—an activity that might fairly be described as useless. Crawford may have set out to write a book about work, but the book he actually wrote is about consumption. No less than Pollan, he is a connoisseur, exercised more by shoddy workmanship than by shoddy working conditions.

In "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," the narrator sees motorcycles as a noble alternative to the constraining influence of cars: "Because you're used to it, you don't realize that through that car window everything you see is just more TV." Similarly, agrarians have long contrasted the rude vitality of farm life with the enervating effects of life in an office, or in a factory. Crawford's distaste for office work can make any alternative seem preferable, and he comes close to idealizing life among the gears and gaskets, lauding the admirable simplicity of "the relationship between a machinist and his shop boss." This nostalgic tribute is, of course, proof positive that hard jobs get much easier to love as soon as they start to disappear. If Crawford is correct about the decline of America's information economy, we should brace ourselves for a series of mournful, indignant books that eulogize the modern office—a highly networked, quasi-social, semi-autonomous refuge, where turn-of-the-century workers spent their pleasant days solving problems, exploring the limits of coöperation, and wasting valuable company time on the Internet.

In fact, such a book exists already. Alain de Botton shares Crawford's enthusiasm for skilled labor, but for him it's a much more flexible category. In "The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work" (Pantheon; $26), de Botton conducts a charming and unapologetically scattershot tour of global capitalism. He is a first-rate guide, inquisitive and faintly lecherous—at one point, he becomes transfixed by the "knee-length grey woollen shorts" of an administrative assistant named Katie—and, in place of outrage or disgust, he offers finely tuned irony. Like many critics of the current economic order, de Botton notes that as consumers we are "as imaginatively disconnected from the manufacture and distribution of our goods as we are practically in reach of them." But he's no localist; he merely observes, with ambivalence and resignation, that this process has denied us "myriad opportunities for wonder, gratitude and guilt." (It seems apt that the book is available in a signed, limited-edition printing from the British luxury-travel magazine *Monocle*, for ninety dollars; it comes packaged in a "tactile linen cover that will wear gently with use and age.") When Pollan described his visit to a high-tech breakfast-cereal laboratory in Minneapolis, he scarcely bothered to conceal his disapproval. And, when de Botton tours a biscuit factory in Belgium, he starts with mockery: "Grief was the only rational response to the news that an employee had spent three months devising a supermarket promotion based on an offer of free stickers of cartoon characters called the Fimbles." Then he thinks better of it and decides that, with a little imagination, it is possible to see the biscuit factory as an ennobling place:

> The manufacture and promotion of all these [products] was no game, but rather an attempt to subsist which was no less grave, and therefore no less worthy of respect and dignity, than a boar hunt on whose successful conclusion the fate of an entire primitive community might once have hung. For if a new wrapping machine did not operate as efficiently as anticipated, or if a slogan failed to capture the imagination of shoppers, there would be no escape from shuttered houses and despair in the suburbs of nearby Verviers. The biscuits carried lives on their backs.

Crawford's brief for skilled manual labor is rooted in firsthand experience: repairing motorcycles fills him with a "sense of agency and competence." But what would he say to the accountants in de Botton's book, who express "earnest pride in their mastery of a labyrinthine craft"? Crawford decries our "ignorance of the world of artifacts," and mourns "the disappearance of tools from our common education." But he never quite gets around to explaining what counts as a tool, and why. The new-economy theorist Richard Florida once praised the innovative practices of Best Buy, the electronics retailer, by noting that, after a sales associate made a small but effective improvement to a display rack, the corporation implemented the change nationwide. Crawford finds the whole thing risible, but why shouldn't a retail display rack count as a tool, in Crawford's sense of the word? It's a physical device meant to perform a particular function, and the shop's cash registers generate a fairly accurate record of how well it succeeds.

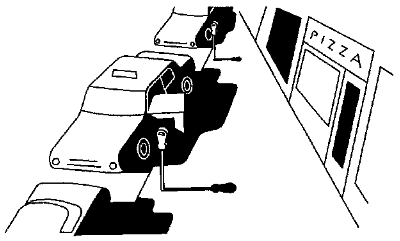
For that matter, it's not clear why physical objects should have some special claim to toolness. In "The Craftsman," Sennett writes about open-source software projects like Linux as expressions of modern craftsmanship. But, then, Sennett, whom Crawford cites, isn't really an information-age refusenik. In fact, some business executives read his book to learn how to persuade their staff to be more craftsmanlike—that is, to be more valuable employees. On the back cover, there is a blurb from James H. Dulebohn, a professor whose specialties include strategic human-resources management. And Sennett writes admiringly of William Edwards Deming, the twentieth-century business guru who encouraged companies to embrace a program that Pirsig's narrator might recognize: total quality management. On Amazon.com, the top-ranked customer review calls Sennett's book "a worthwhile read for managers, for H.R. people, for craftspeople of all stripes."

Crawford needn't be jealous, though. With a minimum of tweaking, he could turn "Shop Class as Soulcraft" into a first-rate motivational speech for business groups nationwide. (Though he may want to omit any similes involving Volkswagens.) His encomium to "tangible work that is straightforwardly useful" could easily be taken as a general exhortation to excellence. In extolling "mindful labor," he captures precisely the quality that most managers would like to reinforce in the workers they supervise. And when he writes about the importance of "seeing clearly, or unselfishly," and "the experience of being fully engaged in what you are doing," he sounds like one of those business consultants he despises, delivering a message that is all the more effective because it comes covered in a sweet glaze of anti-corporate rabble-rousing. Crawford wants his readers to become better, happier, more productive workers. Who could argue with that? ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Bite the Hand That Feeds You, *by Henry Fairlie, edited by Jeremy McCarter (Yale; $30).* American publishers these days are loath to publish collections and miscellanies except by "brand-name" authors. (The short story has suffered from a similar prejudice.) Happy then is the occasion when a publisher sees fit to gather and gift-wrap a bouquet as fragrant and resplendent as Henry Fairlie's political journalism. A Grub Street transplant, Fairlie brought to America a fluency in history and prose, a jagged wit, a newcomer's affection for the New World, and a set of self-destructive life-style habits charming only in hindsight. We could use more of his kind. Fairlie, who had an unmistakable voice—Tory, yet unpredictable—did most of his finest work at *The New Republic.* This smartly edited collection gets him at his best, a principled conservative with an eye out for the fatuous. George Will's fatuousness, for example. Fairlie's take-down of the columnist, circa 1986, is a real joy.

Go Down Together, *by Jeff Guinn (Simon & Schuster; $27).* When Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow let a lawman they'd taken hostage go, he asked Bonnie what she wanted him to tell the press. "Tell them I don't smoke cigars," she said. She had become Clyde's "cigar-smoking gun-girl," thanks to a roll of film found after a shoot-out, which showed the pair posing playfully with guns and a stolen car, and included a shot of Bonnie with a cigar in her mouth. Guinn writes that they were far less glamorous and a lot scrawnier than Depression-era magazines (and, later, Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty) might suggest; between holdups, they slept in the woods and ate cold beans out of cans. Barrow's real strength was as a driver who maneuvered through multiple states with reckless speed, and Guinn's engaging book reads like a road story—two kids from the Dallas slums in a fast car, headed to nowhere good. The truest part of the legend of Bonnie and Clyde was their affection for one another.



How to Sell, *by Clancy Martin (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* If the title sounds instructional, it might concern the marketing of a début novel: sex, drugs, and bling get noticed. There's plenty of all three in this story of Bobby Clark, a Canadian kleptomaniac who, expelled from high school for stealing a case of class rings, joins his brother in the jewelry business. Coke snorting, meth smoking, and extramarital affairs ensue. Martin has a poetic sensibility, despite his tawdry subject, and he gives a mesmerizing appeal to the setting of an alexandrite necklace and the delicate artistry involved in shaping a diamond. This fine descriptive power fails him when it comes to the workings of his characters, however, and it is difficult to find much sympathy as their destructive habits bring them closer and closer to a violent end.

The Exchange Rate Between Love and Money, *by Thomas Leveritt (Simon & Schuster; $15).* Love story, tone poem, and seething meditation on history and politics, this début novel begins with a love triangle involving a Swiss beauty investigating Serbian atrocities and a pair of postcollegiate hustlers—best friends from London who have come to Sarajevo for the "killings" to be made from "Dayton money." The story quickly opens into a kaleidoscopic exploration of Bosnia-Herzegovina's postwar chaos via the intersecting lives of a motley group of Westerners working for N.G.O.s and the like. By turns exuberant, furious, bawdy, and mournful, the book shifts between big-picture history and the idiosyncratic passions of its players. As in classic Pynchon, Looney Tunes antics—such as a quest to prove that a mystical property in Sarajevo's local beer supply allowed the city to survive its traumatic siege—illuminate larger truths.

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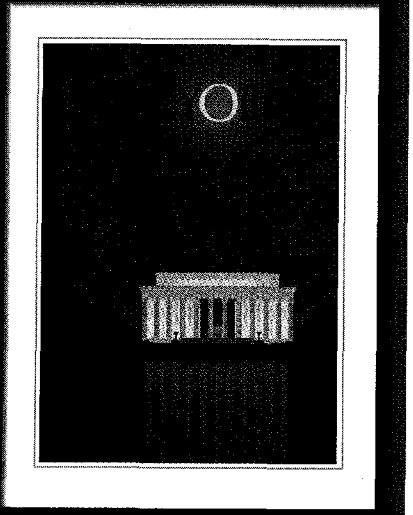
REFLECTION

by Bob Staake

Issue date: November 17, 2008



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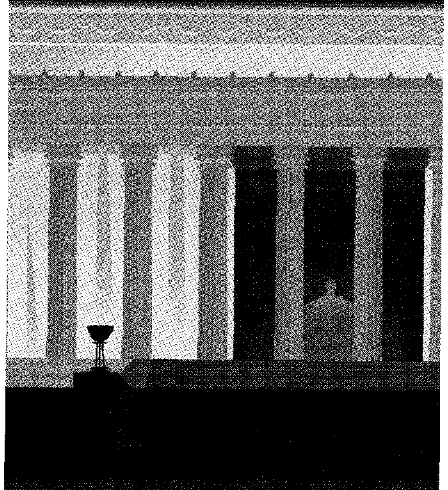

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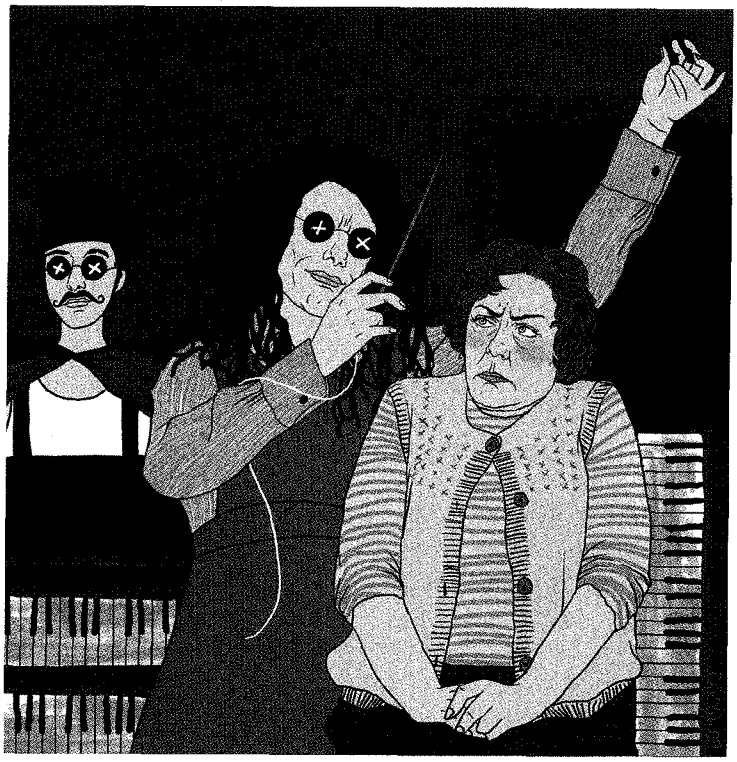
THE THEATRE

WORLD OF WHIMSY

"Coraline" goes through the looking glass.

BY HILTON ALS



Villar, Greenspan, and Houdyshell cross over into an alternate universe.

The singer-songwriter Stephin Merritt is strange. He grew up in an untraditional family—his mother is a practicing Buddhist, and he never met his father, the folksinger Scott Fagan—and he is openly gay, but one can always sense, in his songs and side projects, a fascination with the socially normative. As a child, Merritt came down with what he believes is hyperacusis, a condition that causes feedback in his left ear if he is exposed to high frequencies. As a result, perhaps, his best-known work, with the indie band the Magnetic Fields, feels aurally recessive; the minimal instrumentals are Kurt Weill-like in their dissonance and syncopation, and in their pauses between notes—the white space of musical reflection.

Merritt's lyrics give his songs their contrapuntal force. He piles up his words with great skill; no matter how slowly they're sung, the ideas in a Merritt song have momentum, and the cumulative self-portrait that he presents, in his dry singing style—he has a lovely conversational bass voice—is of a queer boy perpetually in search of love, a kind of daffy and sardonic Noël Coward, whose lyrics radiate smarty-pants sophistication. In a song from the band's popular 1999 album, "69 Love Songs," he sings:

Eligible, not too stupid,
intelligible and cute as Cupid,
knowledgeable, but not always right,
salvageable and free for the night
Well, my heart's running round
like a chicken with its head cut off

But occasionally a darker, Lorenz Hart-like sensibility emerges, as in "My Sentimental Melody":

Love can kill people, can't it
Well, it still may kill me
Each drop of rain
is a glass of champagne
It's sweet and it's free
When I drink I don't panic
When I drink I don't die

In this song, Merritt seems to balance his compulsion to be charming with a little more awareness—of his own life in the era of AIDS, and of how the disease can shape and twist a gay man's desire. "My Sentimental Melody" evinces the kind of emotional complexity that could have made Merritt's music and lyrics for the new musical "Coraline" (at the Lucille Lortel) ring true. But, instead, he gave in to his tendency to hide behind language, to use sentimentality and corniness as a defense against vulnerability and need. This is a pity, because the protagonist of "Coraline," which is based on Neil Gaiman's 2002 best-selling children's book, should be defined by her vulnerability, not smothered in verbose cuteness, as she is in this adaptation (with a book by David Greenspan).

Coraline (Jayne Houdyshell) is a young English girl—an only child—whose family moves to a creaky old house that they share with a number of other tenants, among them the old maids Miss Spink and Miss Forcible (January LaVoy and Francis Jue), former actresses who occupy the apartment below Coraline's, along with a number of terriers. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible warn the inquisitive Coraline not to play too much on the grounds, so she explores the great house instead. And it's during these investigations that she gains access to another world, by walking through a formerly bricked-up doorway in her parents' drawing room.

Of course, the world that Coraline enters is the world of her own imagination—her id. (Her superego is the blocked doorway.) But, strangely, once we're inside it we don't see anything truly transformative going on. Coraline is still Coraline, even when her playthings come to life around her. After she passes through the looking glass—which happens relatively early in this lean, hundred-minute, intermissionless show—we can feel the gifted director, Leigh Silverman, ceding control of the production to Merritt and Greenspan, who pack on the whimsy like so much pancake makeup. And this is "Coraline" 's undoing. Rather than exploit the burgeoning terror that Coraline might experience at being uprooted and tossed into new surroundings, Greenspan and Merritt concentrate on making this alternate version of her life even sweeter and more quirky than the real one. Traversing the beautiful set by Christine Jones—its dark, intimate spaces bring to mind Russian nesting dolls and John Doyle's brilliant stage design for Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's "Road Show" at the Public last year—the old actresses turn into young, vibrant performers, who sing to Coraline:

> Theatre is fun!
> There is a role for everyone;
> You simply stand upon a stage, and that
>   is Art.
> Deliver one line, and it's a "part." . . .
>
> You simply say—
> "I'm in Hawaii—"
> And you're there.
> You can be Antigone—
> Or Cher!

The campy references don't make up for the fact that Coraline is an uninteresting character, not least because Greenspan and Merritt have no feel for the inner life of girls and women. The female characters are ciphers—ideas about women, just as Coraline is an idea about children. (Several of them are played by men—Greenspan himself appears as Coraline's mother in the alternate world—while Coraline, a pre-teen, is played by a fifty-five-year-old.) Houdyshell's Coraline is sour-faced and obdurate, a drag queen's version of a little girl, wrapped up in bows, throwing shade. Houdyshell tries to signal that she's a kid by lisping and taking dainty steps, but she's unconvincing because she's too knowing, too sensible for any actual child to identify with.

The only performer who brings a sense of joy to the enterprise is Elliot Villar, who plays Mr. Bobo, Coraline's Eastern European upstairs neighbor, the ringmaster of a mouse circus. Villar is a star; he wants to be looked at, and he rewards the attention by dramatizing what we can't see. But he's hampered by the small stage, the small book, and the small score: he needs an auditorium to fully release his talent. Watching Villar's youthful vibrancy—and imagining all that he will do in what is already a promising career (he graduated from the Yale School of Drama in 2007)—I was reminded of the late great actor of color Franklyn Seales, whose own career ended before its time; he died of AIDS in 1990, at the age of thirty-seven.

On the night I attended "Coraline," the audience responded more enthusiastically to "Theatre is fun" than to any other song—perhaps because it best represents the sensibilities of the show's creators: arch, supercilious, and coated in bitter fairy dust. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

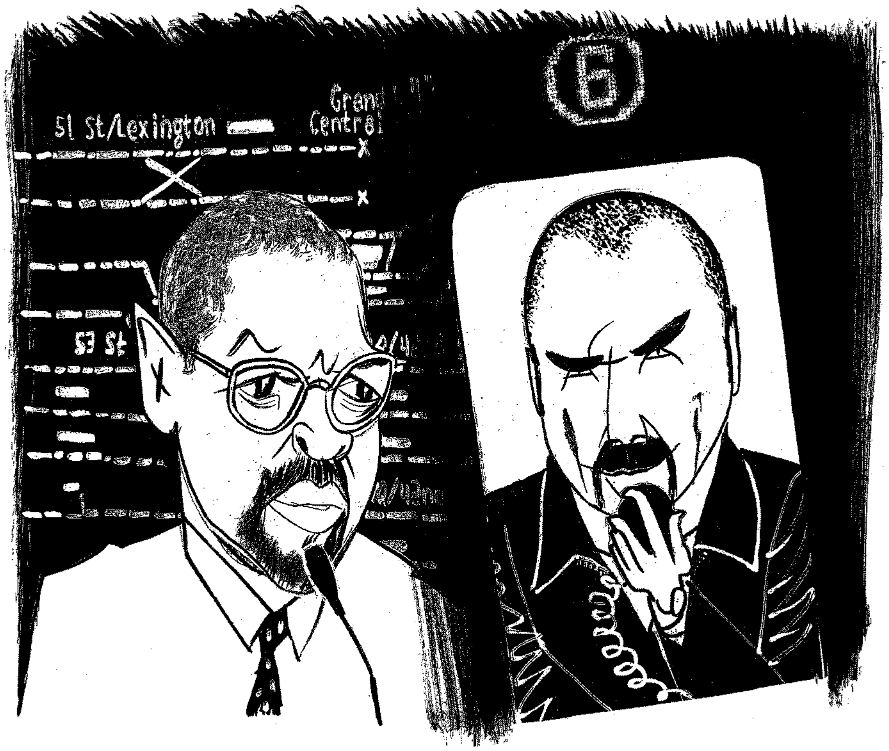
OFF THE RAILS

"The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3" and "Whatever Works."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A close analysis of the differences between the new Tony Scott movie, "The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3," and the movie of the same name from 1974 can be boiled down to this: one film ends with an armed face-off, on a bridge, with cops running, traffic snorting, and trains rattling by; the other ends with a sneeze. Can you possibly guess which is which?

The basic dough of the plot is unaltered; the changes are all in the frosting. A bunch of crooks, led by a loudmouth who calls himself Ryder (John Travolta), take over a New York subway train, give the city an hour to come up with a ransom, and promise to kill a hostage every minute after that. The hijack itself is nicely under way by the end of the opening credits, so no one could accuse the director of hanging back. Indeed, for the rest of the film he likes to flash up a number of minutes to warn of the oncoming deadline. In case we don't get it, the characters consult their watches, too, in product-blazoning closeup, with Travolta taking especial care to advertise the same brand that he does in magazines. Whether buyers in need of a timepiece will be encouraged to follow the example of a homicidal nihilist only market research will tell.



Denzel Washington and John Travolta in Tony Scott's new movie.

In the earlier version, directed by Joseph Sargent, the villain's nemesis was a transit cop, played by Walter Matthau. Here he's a train dispatcher named Garber (Denzel Washington), and the core of the movie lies in his phone negotiations with Ryder: a bullish patty-cake, with each man trying to outflank the other. "Keep deflecting" is the advice that Garber is given, in his effort to stall the mayhem. Predictably, this soon becomes a straight testosterone contest, with none of the surprise of sly-versus-bluff that John Malkovich and Clint Eastwood, say, brought to their exchanges during "In the Line of Fire." Not that the swagger of the camerawork and the editing would allow for the practice of subtlety. If anything, you come away with a vague impression of having been cuffed over the ears with a Steadicam. The one exception to this is a ludicrous scene in which Ryder, having learned that Garber is not a regular dispatcher—he has been demoted from a senior post, on suspicion of taking a bribe—exhorts him, on speaker phone, to confess his sin. Denzel Washington's eyes well up, and the score, devised by Harry Gregson-Williams, which begins with wrathful hip-hop, slows to a mournful theme whose first four notes echo the leitmotif of "Parsifal." Can a director be arrested for the attempted hijack of our emotions?

You may be wondering how Ryder got hold of this information. I could explain it, just as I could unravel the minor subplot in which one of the hostages maintains an online video feed to his incredibly stupid girlfriend back home. But the truth is that, under the mildest inspection, every strand of this story—as scripted by Brian Helgeland—frays into absurdity. Do you need to hear about the rat that strays up the pant leg of a police marksman? Or the multiple pileups in the streets? These are caused by the police vehicles racing to bring the bags of ransom money—crashes that could have been avoided, as the mayor (James Gandolfini) points out, by the use of something called a helicopter. With respect, Mr. Mayor, you don't understand: devastation, in the world according to Tony Scott, is less a regrettable by-product of events than their raison d'être. You get more buck from a bang.

What has happened, since the tale was first told, thirty-five years ago, is not that the rules of cinema have been transformed but that "The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3.2," as I like to think of it, is a game that declares itself to be a game. There is no pretense that any of the verities, whether of incident or of character, are in play, or that anything of moral weight is at stake; the hostages, only a couple of whom are honored with a name, seem as disposable to Scott as they are to the nefarious Ryder. As for Garber, he may claim to be "just a guy on the other end of the mike," but he soon sharpens up from coffee-spilling doofus to gun-toting angel of justice, and both Washington and Travolta, rather than inhabiting their parts, struck me as film stars toying with flashy personae—with a pair of fictional showoffs who might well admit to enjoying their dramatic predicament. I'm not sure that any genre of movie, least of all the thriller, can survive such a blast of self-consciousness. Keep deflecting like this, and there'll be no more stories to tell.

For the second time in a month, a redhead saves the day. It happened with "Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian," the new Ben Stiller comedy about waxworks and a host of ancient artifacts being brought back to life. The film dozed along until it was slapped awake by Amy Adams, whose bobbed and ballsy turn as Amelia Earhart is the most cheering performance of the year. Now the torch is passed to Patricia Clarkson, who just about rescues "Whatever Works," the new Woody Allen comedy about a waxwork (an aging New York Jewish intellectual) and a host of ancient artifacts (trio-playing buddies, worries about an indifferent cosmos, the desires of a compliant younger woman) being brought back to life. It should be called "Manhattan: Battle of the Upper West Side."

Apparently, the story was written in the nineteen-seventies. Only now, like something out of "Sleeper," has it been defrosted. Boris Yellnikoff (Larry David), once a professor of physics, has been reduced to teaching chess to kids. He has a limp (the result of a failed suicide attempt), a scuzzy apartment, and a firm belief that he was tipped for a Nobel Prize. So he tells us, anyhow, turning and talking to the camera in the first scene, and then throughout the film. This was a beautiful trick when deployed in "Annie Hall"—in a schoolroom, at the movies, during lunch with Annie's family—but those monologues were cut short as other voices intruded, eliding the narcissism of the hero and forcing him to join a crowded world. Boris, by contrast, is allowed to rant at leisure, barely drawing a laugh, and we are left with the sense of a locked-in soul—a proud one, too, as if he alone (plus, by implication, the director) were witness to an inarguable truth.

One night, heading home, Boris is accosted by a damsel in distress—a teenage Mississippi runaway named Melody St. Ann Celestine (Evan Rachel Wood). Needless to say, she is no junkie or con artist, but a cutie-pie in need of consolation, who moves in with the old-timer and marries him: a low-rent update on the Susan Alexander who was picked up by Charles Foster Kane. I was hoping for an Allen switcheroo, of the kind he perfected in "Bullets Over Broadway": Melody and Boris would slowly swap philosophical positions, with him flipping sunny-side up and her fading into a grouch. It doesn't happen. Instead, the plot halts, re-starting only when Melody's mother, Marietta (Clarkson), raps on the door. One look at Boris, resplendent in boxer shorts and robe, and she faints. "He's not a husband," she says. "He's more of an outpatient."

This is pretty broad stuff, but Clarkson is so much more vital and amiable than anyone else that you instantly root for her. I think Allen knows that, which is why he loads *her* with the switch; the tight conscience of the Southern Christian busts right open, and Marietta winds up having a show of nude photographs and living in a ménage a trois. The trouble is that she can't be allowed to take over the film, so Allen bundles her story onto the sidelines and directs our attention, instead, to the rolling mopes of his alter ego, Boris, and to Melody's fling with a drippy Brit. His name is Randy (Henry Cavill), and his idea of a come-on is "I read and I think and I play my flute." Oh, please. You know what you can do with your flute.

Somewhere in "Whatever Works" is the grit of a great movie. It would be a movie in which Allen interrogates his own nostalgia; in which the Larry David character, rather than being handed a free pass, would have his fatalism tested by a younger generation—not by Melody, whose uneducated blitheness is too cartoonish to present a threat, but by a smart male for whom the twitches of neurosis are as fusty as costume drama. Or how about a retread, in which Boris picks on someone his own age and finds love with Marietta? In which, to his astonishment, she balks at the speed of her cultural makeover? There is something both majestic and sad in Allen's abiding conviction that anyone from outside the tristate area is either an airhead or a chronic hick, and that a dose of Manhattan is the last and best chance for a cure. There was always a dreaminess in his vision of the city, but now it feels as distant as the polished floors and the Deco furnishings of the Fred Astaire movies that Boris finds—of course—whenever he turns on the TV. How do you *do* that, Boris? Real people get the shopping channel. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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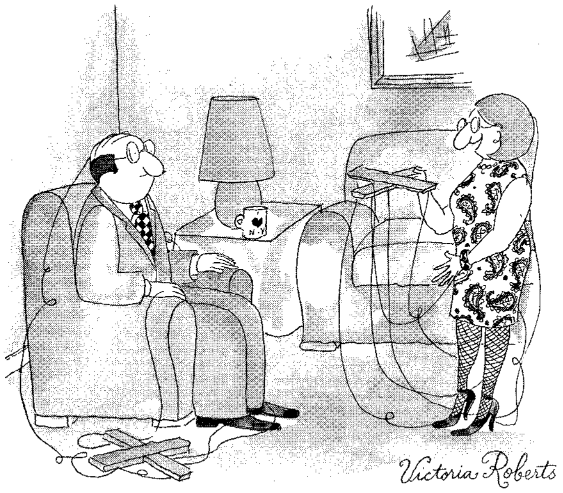
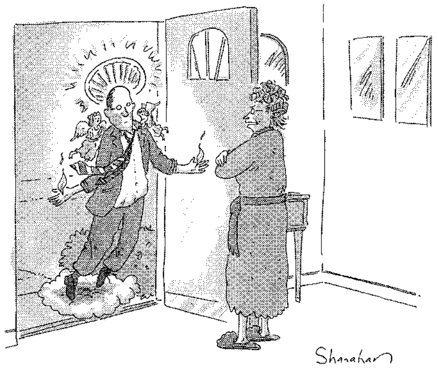
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Drew Dernavich, must be received by Sunday, June 21st. Finalists in the June 1st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 6th & 13th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Free will is overrated."
Nahomi Harkavy, Greensboro, N.C.



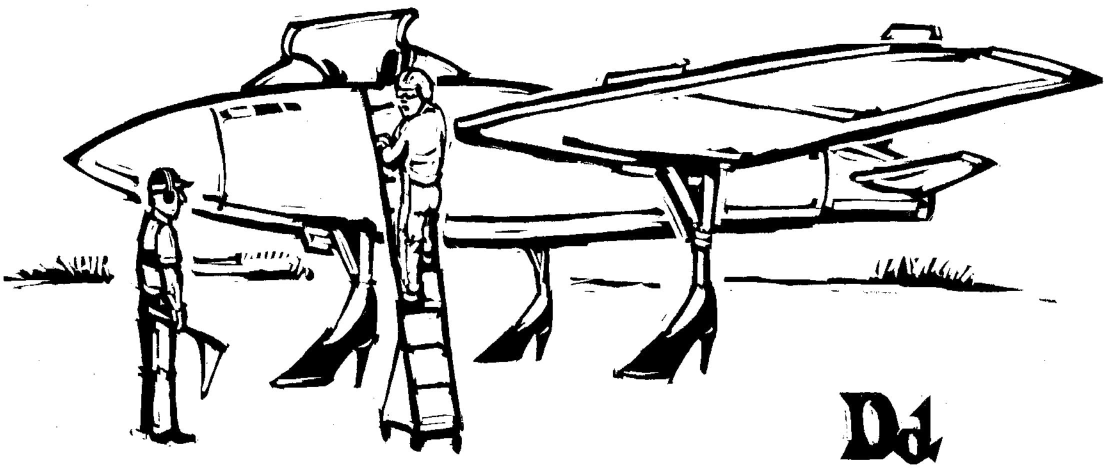
THE FINALISTS

"Don't give me that holier-than-thou attitude!"
Paul Greengross, Granada Hills, Calif.

"Which part of 'till death do us part' didn't you understand?"
Caroline Johnston Polisi, New York City

"I guess it really did kill you to call."
Dorran Dihle, Seattle, Wash.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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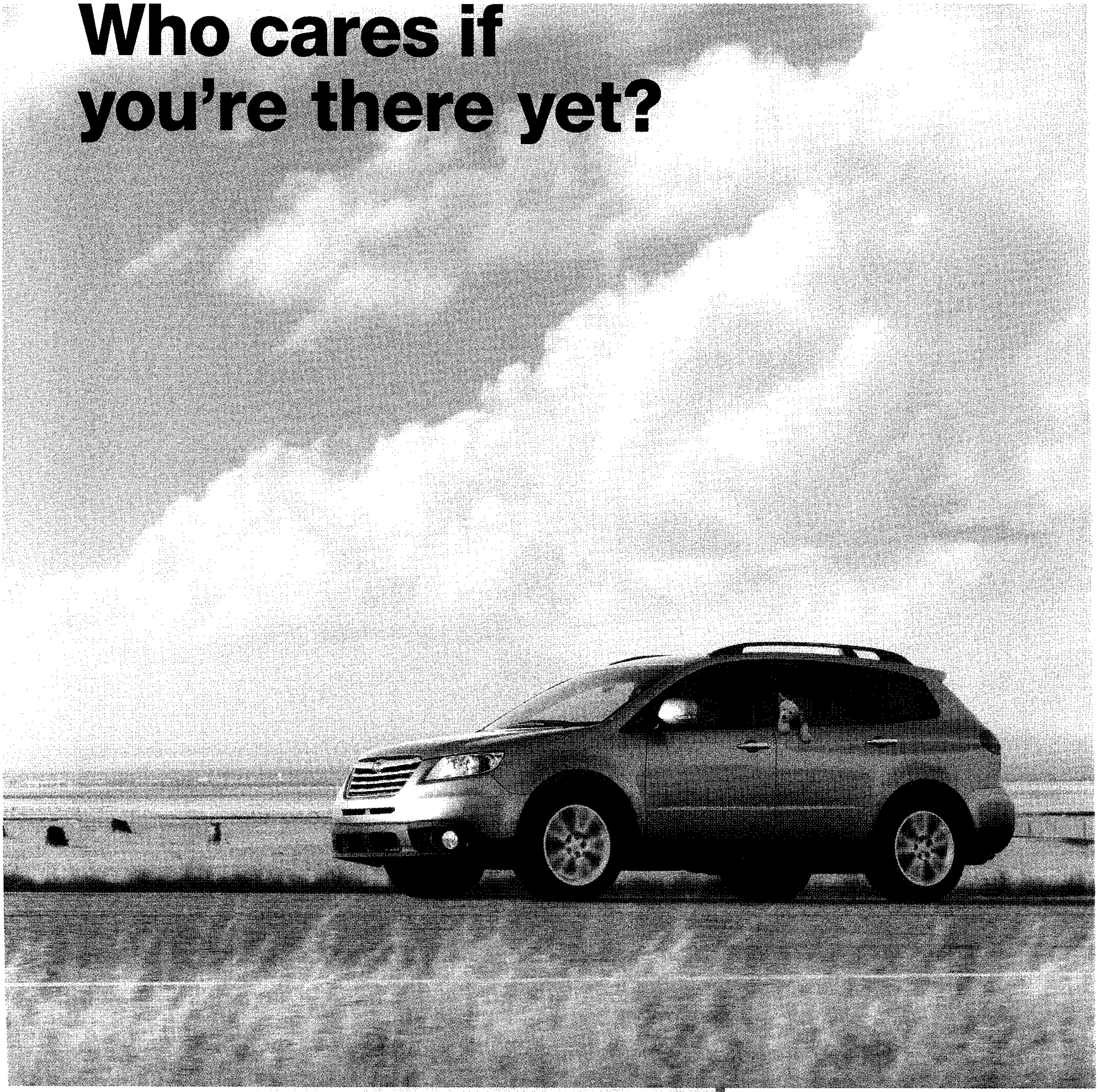
Who cares if you're there yet?



With the Tribeca, all the fun is in getting there. An available third row ensures plenty of seating, while the Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive gives you a firm grip on the road. And since t's a 2009 IIHS Top Safety Pick, you get peace of mind as well. Family and the open road go together better than you thought. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**

SUBARU

What happened when New Jersey teenagers had to wait a year longer to drive?

MORE OF THEM LIVED TO TALK ABOUT IT.

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698-71
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Class of 2009

New Jersey strengthened its Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws and has saved lives. By simply raising its driving age from 16 to 17, not only did New Jersey see a dramatic decrease in teen driving deaths, it became one of the least deadly states for teen drivers.

Allstate believes there's a way to make every turnpike, highway, route and dirt road safer for teens.

SUPPORT THE STANDUP ACT OF 2009

The STANDUP Act* (H.R. 1895) creates a National Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law that limits nighttime driving, reduces in-car distractions, puts a cap on the number of friends in the car and increases the required hours of training and supervision. **When states have implemented comprehensive GDL programs, the number of fatal crashes among 16-year-old drivers has fallen by almost 40%.**

Let's make sure that no matter what state a teen calls home, we can all drive through it safely. Tell your congressional representatives that you support the STANDUP Act of 2009. **Go to allstate.com/STANDUP.**

It's time to make the world a safer place to drive. That's Allstate's Stand.

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Retirement

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*The STANDUP Act is the Safe Teen And Novice Driver Uniform Protection Act of 2009.

Sources: IIHS Wheels Weekly, 2008; Allstate America's Teen Driving Hotspots Study, May 2008; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [Online] (2008). The Cupped Hands logo is a registered service mark and "That's Allstate's Stand" is a service mark of Allstate Insurance Company, Northbrook, IL. Allstate New Jersey Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Bridgewater, NJ.

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